Mademoiselle Mignon

Balzac

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MODESTE MIGNON BY HONORE DE BALZAC . . . . . .

NEW YORK, THOMAS Y. CROWELL & COMPANY, PUBLISHERS

CONTENTS

PAGE

INTRODUCTION - - - - ix

MODESTE MIGNON - - - - 1

THE HATED SON:

I. HOW THE MOTHER LIVED - - 273

II. HOW THE SON DIED - - - 329

THE ATHEIST'S MASS - - 379

INTRODUCTION*

[*Modeste Mignon* was first printed in the *Journal des Débats,* the first part running from April 4 to 18, 1844, the second from May 17 to 31, the third from July 5 to 21, of the same year. Before the end of 1844 it was issued in four volumes, with the sub-title of "Ou les Trois Amoureux." It was accompanied in this edition by "Un Épisode sous la Terreur" and "Une Passion dans le Désert," and was divided into seventy-five chapters, since suppressed. In 1845 it entered the "Scènes de la Vie Privée" of the "Comedy." The heroine and her successful lover will be met in a few other novels, but do not play important parts. The other Mignons, the Dumays, the Latournelles, Butscha, and the rest of the Havre characters do not reappear. Canalis we have seen in "Mémoires de Deux Jeunes Mariées," where the Duke and Duchess of Chaulieu figured, and we learned of his marriage in "Un Début dans la Vie." The Prince de Cadignan and his daughter, the Duchess de Maufrigneuse, will be met again, particularly the latter, who is the heroine of "Les Secrets de la Princesse de Cadignan" and one of Balzac's most conspicuous women of fashion. The Duke of Hérouville will figure again (see "La Cousine Bette"), and his family is dealt with in the tale that follows. The seducer, d'Estourny, seems to be the person who appears under a different Christian name in the "Splendeurs et Misères" and "Un Homme d'Affaires." For Desplein, see the last tale in this volume. Most of the other personages mentioned are by this time familiar.

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L'Enfant Maudit appeared in the *Revue des Deux Mondes,* January 1831, but embraced only the first part of the present tale. It was divided into three chapters. The same year it was included in the "Romans et Contes Philosophiques." The second part appeared in the *Chronique de Paris,* October 9, 1836, under the title of "La Perle Brisée." The completed work entered the "Études Philosophiques" in 1837, and in 1846, in two parts, but with former chapter-divisions suppressed, the "Comedy." It appeared also in 1847 along with "Madame de la Chanterie" ("L'Envers de l'Histoire Contemporaine").

La Messe de l'Athée was first printed in the *Chronique de Paris,* January 3, 1836. In 1837 it entered the "Études Philosophiques"; in 1844 it was transferred to the "Scènes de la Vie Parisienne" of the "Comedy," being subsequently assigned to the "Scènes de la Vie Privée" in accordance with Balzac's posthumous notes. The great surgeon Desplein and his protégé Bianchon, about whom some interesting particulars are here given, are already familiar. Bourgeat does not reappear. At the first publication of the story Balzac stated that, while all the circumstances mentioned were true, he had in mind no single character, but rather several persons.]

M. Marcel Barrière has pointed out that "Modeste Mignon" is connected with "Un Début dans la Vie" through the fact that both stories deal with false starts in life made by young persons who after many unpleasant experiences finally attain genuine if somewhat commonplace happiness. It may be further remarked that it holds by the same story in being one of Balzac's best efforts at comedy, and that it holds by "Pierrette" and "Ursule Mirouët" in being, on the whole, quite unexceptionable reading for young girls. It is true that the heroine has been rather harshly criticised for her

conduct in some particulars; but the charges relate to trifles, and, while it cannot, perhaps, be maintained that Balzac has been thoroughly successful in drawing her character, it seems quite clear that he did succeed in making his novel an attractive one that not only bears but gains from a re-reading.

He certainly had an incentive to succeed. The fair Polish lady to whom "Modeste Mignon" is dedicated was no other than *L'Etrangère,* Mme. Hanska, and it appears from a long letter written early in 1844 that the central idea of the novel was hers rather than Balzac's. He actually wished her to write the story and let him publish it over his name, and he shortly after went to work upon it with great enthusiasm. "I have turned over," he wrote, "in a hundred ways your idea of a novel, which is a very beautiful thing; it is the combat of reality and poetry, of the ideal and the positive, of physical poetry and of that which is a faculty, an effect of the soul. I shall do this work; it may become something great and beautiful." (See *Correspondence,* II., pp. 85, 89, 95, 122.)

It can hardly be granted that the finished work answered his hopes fully. There is nothing great about it, and the element of beauty seems to have been replaced by that of charm. There is novelty, as Professor Saintsbury has well shown, in the conception, early in the forties, of a self-willed, independent young girl, and in Balzac's apparent justification, in facts though not in words, of the English ideal of marriage, a subject that had occupied him years before in the "Physiologie du Mariage." There is interest, especially in the comic intrigues that enable Modeste to make her choice, although it must be confessed that some of Balzac's expedients for keeping up this interest are not novel. Men have been often deceived, like Canalis, about the incomes of their prospective fathers-in-law, and hopeless love, like that

of the hunchback, Butscha, is no new thing in fiction. We may say the same of the devotion of Dumay to Colonel Mignon; but such devotion is so desirable in real life that its lack of novelty as an ingredient in a story should not be laid up against Balzac. And after all, Dumay is a strong individual character, who, with the other Havre personages, fits well into the provincial environment which Balzac has described excellently, of course, although with hardly the success attained in some other stories.

But the feeling that "Modeste Mignon" does not represent Balzac at his very best is not due entirely to the lack of his individual touch in the development of some of the characters and in the management of some of the incidents. It is probably due quite as much to the facts that the story does not move upon a very high plane, that the heroine does not take hold of one's heart, perhaps because Balzac had studied rather than seen her, and that her successful lover, La Brière, is not so much of a hero as one could wish. The father, Colonel Mignon, seems to be better drawn, although it may be thought that Balzac makes his characters bring home fortunes a little too often. But it is on Canalis that our author has evidently expended most effort, and, while the result is partly satisfactory, the story suffers.

For Canalis, it would seem, is portrayed in a mordant way that scarcely suits a comedy. Balzac appears to take a personal interest in showing up his hard, selfish nature, and in proving to the public that celebrities are in many instances very contemptible characters. To show up such a character is one thing; to seem to expend one's energy in doing it is quite another, and is distinctly inartistic. Naturally many efforts have been made to discover what man of letters unwittingly sat to Balzac for this unflattering portrait, opinion fluctuating between Lamartine and Chateaubriand. It is most probable that the picture is a composite one—that

Canalis is Chateaubriand masquerading as Lamartine. Whoever he is, he is made to cut such a sorry figure that we wonder how so strong a character as the Duchess de Chaulieu could have managed to put up with him.

It is needless to go into many further details. Some readers will doubtless like the love letters inserted, others will be glad that Balzac omitted to give the whole correspondence, which the curious may compare with his own epistles to Mme. Hanska and to the unknown Louise; our author having resembled Canalis at least in being the recipient of many letters from impressionable ladies. Whether these ladies wrote in the style of Modeste may be doubted, but it must be remembered that she was something of a blue stocking as well as a highly romantic girl whose dreams are well described. That she had in her the making of a society woman is quite clear from the scene in which she almost embroils Canalis with the Duchess—a scene which is by no means the only good one in the story. For, when all is said, "Modeste Mignon" could not have been written by any one save Balzac. It contains some of his best analysis, and is full of observations on character and life that alone would make it worth reading. Whatever may be its final rank in the "Comedy," we should accept it thankfully if only for the fact that it lights up an edifice which many persons find too dark for their comfort.

"L'Enfant Maudit" has been the subject of great admiration and of almost positive contempt. It has been compared with some of the youthful stories and also with "Séraphita." The latter seems the fairer comparison, although the tale is good enough to stand by itself. In November 1836, Balzac wrote Mme. Hanska: "I have just finished *L'Enfant Maudit* this very morning. You will no longer recognize this poor bar of gold; it is chased, mounted, finished, adorned with pearls." There is more in this sentence than the pretty allusion to the title of the second part—which was dashed off

in a single night—"La Perle Brisée." It contains a very just criticism of the tale about which it was written. The subject matter of "L'Enfant Maudit" is the pure gold of romance. The trembling mother, the cruel father, the sensitive son, the faithful retainer who deceives his master for the latter's own good, the old sorcerer-physician, his ethereal daughter, the idyllic loves of Gabrielle and Étienne, their deaths from terror caused by the violence of the old Duke,—what is all this but excellent material for genuine romance, and how idle it is to suppose that with such material Balzac was likely to go back to his youthful style of writing! His lapse into this style in "La Femme de Trente Ans" was due rather to his mistaken use of old material already worked upon, than to bungling use of fresh material. No, it is the artist, not the bungler, that is seen in "L'Enfant Maudit." The philosopher is seen also in the subtle treatment of maternal love—a subject which occupied Balzac later, as we have already seen ("Mémoires de Deux Jeunes Mariées")—and of the mutual attraction of innocent, sensitive souls. But it is after all the story-teller that triumphs. We are interested in the fate of mother and child and of the two lovers. The admirable descriptions carry us back to the end of the sixteenth century, and we feel again that, whenever he did not allow his knowledge of the past to intrude too much, Balzac was capable of writing excellent historical fiction. We feel also that rarely elsewhere has the effect of nature—in this case of the ocean—upon a sensitive soul been better portrayed. Both in matter and in form, then, "L'Enfant Maudit" deserves the praise its author gave it.

"La Messe de l'Athée"—so Balzac wrote Mme. Hanska—was conceived, written, and printed in a night, and had a great success when published in the *Chronique de Paris*. It has had a great success since, being almost universally regarded as one of its author's most admirable short stories. It was

dedicated to Auguste Borget, with whom Balzac had almost as close relations, perhaps, as Desplein with Bourgeat; and it reminds us that in his treatment of Sandeau and some other struggling persons our great novelist showed himself to be capable of exhibiting the humane feelings which he has here described with consummate literary art. "La Messe de l'Athée" is of itself almost a sufficient refutation of the charge that Balzac gives his readers an over-sombre view of life.

W. P. TRENT.

MODESTE MIGNON

To a Polish Lady

Daughter of an enslaved land, an angel in your love, a demon in your imagination, a child in faith, an old man in experience, a man in brain, a woman in heart, a giant in hope, a mother in suffering, a poet in your dreams, and Beauty itself withal—this work, in which your love and your fancy, your faith, your experience, your suffering, your hopes, and your dreams, are like chains by which hangs a web less lovely than the poetry cherished in your soul—the poetry whose expression when it lights up your countenance is, to those who admire you, what the characters of a lost language are to the learned—this work is yours.

DE BALZAC.

IN the beginning of October 1829, Monsieur Simon-Babylas Latournelle, a notary, was walking up the hill from le Havre to Ingouville arm in arm with his son, and accompanied by his wife. By her, like a page, came the notary's head-clerk, a little hunchback named Jean Butscha. When these four persons—of whom two at least mounted by the same way every evening—reached the turn in the zigzag road (like what the Italians call a Cornice), the notary looked about him to see whether any one might overhear him from some garden terrace above or below, and as an additional precaution he spoke low.

"Exupère," said he to his son, "try to carry out in an intelligent manner, without guessing at the meaning, a little manœuvre I will explain to you; and even if you have a suspicion, I desire you will fling it into the Styx which every

notary or law-student ought to keep handy for other people's secrets. After paying your respects, homage, and devoir to Madame and Mademoiselle Mignon, to Monsieur and Madame Dumay, and to Monsieur Gobenheim, if he is at the Chalet, when silence is restored, Monsieur Dumay will take you aside; look attentively—I allow you—at Mademoiselle Modeste all the time he is talking to you. My worthy friend will ask you to go out for a walk and return in about an hour, at about nine o'clock, with a hurried air; try to seem quite out of breath, then whisper in his ear, but loud enough for Mademoiselle Modeste to hear: 'The young man is coming!' "

Exupère was to start for Paris on the following day to begin his law studies. It was this prospect of departure which had led Latournelle to propose to his friend Dumay that his son should play the assistant in the important conspiracy which may be suspected from his instructions.

"Is Mademoiselle Modeste suspected of carrying on an intrigue?" asked Butscha timidly of his mistress.

"Hsh—Butscha!" replied Madame Latournelle, taking her husband's arm.

Madame Latournelle, the daughter of the Registrar of the lower Court, considers herself justified by her birth in describing her family as *parliamentary*. These pretensions account for the efforts made by the lady, whose face is rather too red and rough, to assume the majesty of the tribunal whose verdicts are recorded by her father. She takes snuff, holds herself as stiff as a post, gives herself airs of importance, and looks exactly like a mummy that has been galvanized into life for a moment. She tries to give her sharp voice an aristocratic tone, but she no more succeeds in that than in concealing her defective education. Her social value is indisputable when you look at the caps she wears, bristling with flowers, the false fronts plastered on her temples, and the gowns she chooses. How could the shops get rid of such goods if it were not for such as Madame Latournelle?

This worthy woman's absurdities might have passed almost unremarked, for she was essentially charitable and pious, but

that Nature, which sometimes has its little jest by turning these grotesque creations, gave her the figure of a drum-major so as to display the devices of her provincial mind. She has never been out of le Havre, she believes in the infallibility of le Havre, she buys everything at le Havre, and gets her dresses there; she speaks of herself as Norman to the finger-tips, she reverences her father, and adores her husband. Little Latournelle was bold enough to marry this woman when she had attained the post-matrimonial age of thirty-three, and they contrived to have a son. As he might anywhere have won the sixty thousand francs which the Registrar had to settle, his unusual courage was set down to a wish to avoid the irruption of the Minotaur, against which his personal attractions would hardly have guaranteed him if he had been so rash as to set his house on fire by bringing home a pretty young wife. The notary had, in fact, simply discerned the good qualities of Mademoiselle Agnès—her name was Agnès—and remarked how soon a wife's beauty is a thing of the past to her husband. As to the insignificant youth to whom the Registrar gave his Norman name at the font, Madame Latournelle was so much astonished to find herself a mother at the age of thirty-five years and seven months, that she would even now find milk to suckle him withal if he needed it—the only hyperbole which can give a notion of her maternal mania.

"How handsome my boy is!" she would say to her little friend Modeste Mignon, without any ulterior motive, as she looked at him on their way to church, her beautiful Exupère leading the way.

"He is like you," Modeste Mignon would reply, as she might have said, "What bad weather!"

This sketch of the woman, a mere accessory figure, seems necessary when it is said that Madame Latournelle had for three years past been the chaperon of the young girl for whom the notary and his friend Dumay were laying one of those snares which, in the *Physiologie du Mariage,* I have called mouse-traps.

As for Latournelle, imagine a good little man, as wily as the purest honesty will allow, but whom every stranger would take for a rogue at first sight of the singular face, to which every one at le Havre is accustomed. Weak eyes, always red, compel the worthy lawyer to wear green spectacles to protect them. Each eyebrow, thinly marked with down, projects about a line beyond the brown tortoise-shell rim of the glasses, thus making a sort of double arch. If you never happen to have noticed in some passer-by the effect of these two semi-circles, one above the other, and divided by a hollow, you cannot conceive how puzzling such a face may be; especially when this face is pale and haggard, and ends in a point like that of Mephistopheles, which painters have taken from the cat, and this is what Babylas Latournelle is like. Above those vile green spectacles rises a bald skull, with a wig all the more obviously artificial because it seems endowed with motion, and is so indiscreet as to show a few white hairs straggling below it all round, while it never sits straight on the forehead. As we look at this estimable Norman, dressed in black like a beetle, on two legs like pins, and know him to be the most honest soul living, we wonder, but cannot discover, what is the reason of such contradictory physiognomies.

Jean Butscha, a poor, abandoned foundling, of whom the Registrar Labrosse and his daughter had taken charge, had risen to be head-clerk by sheer hard work, and was lodged and fed by his master, who gave him nine hundred francs a year. With no appearance of youth, and almost a dwarf, he had made Modeste his idol; he would have given his life for her. This poor creature, his eyes, like two slow matches under thickened eyelids, marked by the smallpox, crushed by a mass of wooly hair, encumbered by his huge hands, had lived under the gaze of pity from the age of seven. Is not this enough to account for him in every way? Silent, reserved, exemplary in his conduct, and religious, he wandered through the vast expanse marked on the map of the realm of Love, as Love without Hope, the barren and sublime wilderness of Longing. Modeste had nicknamed this grotesque clerk "The Mysterious

Dwarf." This led Butscha to read Walter Scott's romance, and he said to Modeste:

"Would you like to have a rose from your Mysterious Dwarf in case of danger?"

Modeste hurled the soul of her adorer down into its mud hovel again by one of the terrible looks which young women fling at men whom they do not like. Butscha had called himself *le clerc obscure* (the obscure clerk), not knowing that the pun dated back to the origin of coats-of-arms; but he, like his master's wife, had never been away from le Havre.

It is perhaps necessary, for the benefit of those who do not know that town, to give a word of explanation as to whither the Latournelle family were bound, the head-clerk evidently being included. Ingouville is to le Havre what Montmartre is to Paris, a high hill with the town spread at its foot; with this difference, however—that the sea and the Seine surround the town and the hill; that le Havre is permanently limited by enclosing fortifications; and finally, that the mouth of the river, the port and the docks, form a scene quite unlike that offered by the fifty thousand houses of Paris.

At the foot of Montmartre an ocean of slates displays its rigid blue waves; at Ingouville you look down on what might be moving roofs stirred by the wind. This high ground, which, from Rouen to the sea, follows the course of the river, leaving a wider or narrower margin between itself and the water, contains treasures of picturesque beauty with its towns, its ravines, its valleys, and its meadows, and rose to immense value at Ingouville after 1818, from which year dates the prosperity of le Havre. This hamlet became the Auteuil, the Ville-d'Avray, the Montmorency of the merchants, who built themselves terraced villas on this amphitheatre, to breathe the sea air sweetened by the flowers of their magnificent gardens. These bold speculators rest there from the fatigues of the counting-house, and the atmosphere of the closely packed houses, with no space between them—often not even a courtyard, the inevitable result of the growth of the population, the unyielding belt of the ramparts and the expansion of the docks.

And, indeed, how dreary is the heart of the town, how glad is Ingouville! The law of social development has made the suburb of Graville sprout into life like a mushroom; it is larger now than le Havre itself, clinging to the foot of the slope like a serpent. Ingouville, on the ridge, has but one street; and, as in all such places, the houses looking over the Seine have an immense advantage over those on the opposite side of the road, from which the view is shut out, though they stand like spectators, on tiptoe, to peep over the roofs. Here, however, as everywhere else, compromises have been exacted. Some of the houses perched on the top occupy a superior position, or enjoy a right of view which compels their neighbor to keep his buildings below a certain height. Then the broken rocky soil has cuttings here and there for roads leading up the amphitheatre, and through these dips, some of the plots get a glimpse of the town, the river, or the sea. Though it is not precipitous, the high ground ends rather suddenly in a cliff; from the top of the street, which zigzags up the steep slope, coombes are visible where villages are planted: Saint-Adresse, two or three Saints-who-knows-who, and coves where the sea roars. This side of Ingouville, almost deserted, is in striking contrast to the handsome villas that overlook the Seine valley. Are the gales a foe to vegetation? Do the merchants shrink from the expense of gardening on so steep a slope? Be this as it may, the traveler by steamboat is startled at finding the coast so bare and rugged to the west of Ingouville—a beggar in rags next to a rich man sumptuously clothed and perfumed.

In 1829, one of the last houses towards the sea—now, no doubt, in the middle of Ingouville—was called, perhaps is still called, the Chalet. It had been originally a gatekeeper's lodge, with a plot of garden in front. The owner of the villa to which it belonged—a house with a paddock, gardens, an aviary, hothouses, and meadows—had a fancy to bring this lodge into harmony with the splendor of his residence, and had it rebuilt in the style of an English cottage. He divided it by a low wall from his lawn, graced with flowers, borders,

and the terrace of the villa, and planted a hedge close to the wall to screen it. Behind this cottage, called the Chalet in spite of all he could do, lie the kitchen garden and orchards. This Chalet—a chalet without cows or dairy—has no fence from the road but a paling, of which the wood has become invisible under a luxuriant hedge.

Now, on the other side of the road, the opposite house has a similar paling and hedge. Being built under special conditions, it allows the town to be seen from the Chalet.

This little house was the despair of Monsieur Vilquin, the owner of the villa. And this is why. The creator of this residence, where every detail loudly proclaimed, "Here millions are displayed!" had extended his grounds into the country solely, as he said, not to have his gardeners in his pocket. As soon as it was finished, the Chalet could only be inhabited by a friend.

Monsieur Mignon, the first owner, was greatly attached to his cashier, and this story will prove that Dumay fully returned the feeling; he therefore offered him this little home. Dumay, a stickler for formalities, made his master sign a lease for twelve years at three hundred francs a year; and Monsieur Mignon signed it willingly, saying, "Consider, my dear Dumay, you are binding yourself to live with me for twelve years."

In consequence of events to be here related, the estates of Monsieur Mignon, formerly the richest merchant in le Havre, were sold to Vilquin, one of his opponents on 'Change. In his delight at taking possession of the famous Villa Mignon, the purchaser forgot to ask for this lease to be cancelled. Dumay, not to hinder the sale, would at that time have signed anything Vilquin might have required; but when once the sale was completed, he stuck to his lease as to a revenge. He stayed in Vilquin's pocket, in the heart of the Vilquin family, watching Vilquin, annoying Vilquin, in short, Vilquin's gadfly. Every morning, at his window, Vilquin felt a surge of violent vexation as he saw this gem of domestic architecture,

this Chalet which had cost sixty thousand francs, and which blazed like a ruby in the sunshine.

An almost exact comparison! The architect had built the cottage of the finest red bricks, pointed with white. The window frames are painted bright green, and the timbers a yellow-brown. The roof projects several feet. A pretty fret-work balcony adorns the first floor, and a veranda stands out like a glass cage from the middle of the front. The ground-floor consists of a pretty drawing-room and a dining-room, divided by the bottom landing of the stairs, which are of wood designed and decorated with elegant simplicity. The kitchen is at the back of the dining-room, and behind the drawing-room is a small room which, at this time, was used by Monsieur and Madame Dumay as their bedroom. On the first floor the architect has planned two large bedrooms, each with a dressing-room, the veranda served as a sitting-room; and above these, in the roof, which looks like two cards leaning against each other, are two servants' rooms, each with a dormer window, attics, but fairly spacious.

Vilquin had the meanness to build a wall on the side next the kitchen garden and orchard. Since this act of vengeance, the few square yards secured to the Chalet by the lease are like a Paris garden. The outbuildings, constructed and painted to match the Chalet, back against the neighboring grounds.

The interior of this pleasant residence harmonizes with the exterior. The drawing-room, floored with polished iron-wood, is decorated with a marvelous imitation of Chinese lacquer. Myriad-colored birds, and impossibly green foliage, in fantastic Chinese drawing, stand out against a black background, in panels with gilt frames. The dining-room is completely fitted with pine-wood carved and fretted, as in the high-class peasants' houses in Russia. The little ante-room, formed by the landing, and the staircase are painted like old oak, to represent Gothic decoration. The bedrooms, hung with chintz, are attractive by their costly simplicity. That in which the cashier and his wife slept is wainscoted, like the cabin of a steamship. These shipowners' vagaries account for Vilquin's

fury. This ill-starred purchaser wanted to lodge his son-in-law and his daughter in the Cottage. This plan, being known to Dumay, may subsequently explain his Breton obstinacy.

The entrance to the Chalet is through a trellised iron gate, with lance-heads, standing some inches above the paling and the hedge. The little garden, of the same width as the pompous lawn beyond, was just now full of flowers—roses, dahlias, and the choicest and rarest products of the hothouse flora; for another subject of grievance to Vilquin was that the pretty little hothouse, Madame's hothouse as it was called, belongs to the Chalet, and divides the Chalet from the Villa—or connects them, if you like to say so. Dumay indemnified himself for the cares of his place by caring for the conservatory, and its exotic blossoms were one of Modeste's chief pleasures. The billiard-room of Vilquin's villa, a sort of passage room, was formerly connected with this conservatory by a large turret-shaped aviary, but after the wall was built which blocked out the view of the orchard, Dumay bricked up the door.

"Wall for wall!" said he.

"You and Dumay have both gone to the wall!" Vilquin's acquaintance on 'Change threw in his teeth; and every day the envied speculator was hailed with some new jest.

In 1827 Vilquin offered Dumay six thousand francs a year and ten thousand francs in compensation if he would cancel the lease; the cashier refused, though he had but a thousand crowns laid by with Gobenheim, a former clerk of his master's. Dumay is indeed a Breton whom fate has planted out in Normandy. Imagine the hatred for his tenants worked up in Vilquin, a Norman with a fortune of three million francs. What high treason to wealth to dare prove to the rich the impotence of gold! Vilquin, whose desperation made him the talk of le Havre, had first offered Dumay the absolute freehold of another pretty house, but Dumay again refused. The town was beginning to wonder at this obstinacy, though many found a reason for it in the statement, "Dumay is a Breton."

In fact, the cashier thought that Madame and Mademoiselle

Mignon would be too uncomfortable anywhere else. His two idols dwelt here in a temple worthy of them, and at least had the benefit of this sumptuous cottage, where a dethroned king might have kept up the majesty of his surroundings, a kind of decorum which is often lacking to those who have fallen. The reader will not be sorry perhaps to have made acquaintance with Modeste's home and habitual companions; for, at her age, persons and things influence the future as much as character does, if indeed the character does not derive from them certain ineffaceable impressions.

By the Latournelles' manner as they went into the Chalet, a stranger might have guessed that they came there every evening.

"Already here, sir?" said the notary, on finding in the drawing-room a young banker of the town, Gobenheim, a relation of Gobenheim-Keller, the head of the great Paris house. This young fellow, who was lividly pale—one of those fair men with black eyes, in whose fixed gaze there is something fascinating—who was as sober in speech as in habits, dressed in black, strongly built, though as thin as a consumptive patient, was a constant visitor to his former master's family and the cashier's house, far less from affection than from interest; whist was played there at two sous a point, and evening dress was not insisted on; he took nothing but a few glasses of *eau sucrée,* and need offer no civilities in return. By his apparent devotion to the Mignons he got credit for a good heart; and it excused him from going into society in le Havre, from useless expenditure, and disturbing the arrangements of his domestic life. This youthful devotee of the Golden Calf went to bed every evening at half-past ten, and rose at five in the morning. Also, being certain of secrecy in Latournelle and Butscha, Gobenheim could analyze in their presence various knotty questions, benefit by the notary's gratuitous advice, and reduce the gossip on 'Change to its true value. This sucking gold-eater (Gobe-or, a witticism of Butscha's) was of the nature of the substances known to chemistry as absorbents. Ever since disaster had overwhelmed

the houe of Mignon, to which he had been apprenticed by the Kellers to learn the higher branches of maritime trade, no one at the Chalet had ever asked him to do a single thing, not even a simple commission; his answer was known beforehand. This youth looked at Modeste as he might have examined a penny lithograph.

"He is one of the pistons of the huge machine called Trade," said poor Butscha, whose wit betrayed itself by little ironies, timidly uttered.

The four Latournelles greeted, with the utmost deference, an old lady dressed in black, who did not rise from the armchair in which she sat, for both her eyes were covered with the yellow film produced by cataract. Madame Mignon may be painted in a sentence. She attracted attention at once by the august expression of those mothers whose blameless life is a challenge to the strokes of fate, though fate has taken them as a mark for its shafts, who form the large class of Niobes. Her white wig, well curled and well put on, became her cold white face, like those of the burgomasters' wives painted by Mirevelt. The extreme neatness of her dress—velvet boots, a lace collar, a shawl put on straight—bore witness to Modeste's tender care for her mother.

When a minute's silence—as predicted by the notary—reigned in the pretty room, Modeste, seated by her mother, for whom she was embroidering a kerchief, was for a moment the centre of all eyes. This inquisitiveness, concealed under the commonplace questions always asked by callers, even those who meet every day, might have betrayed the little domestic plot against the girl, even to an indifferent person; but Gobenheim, more than indifferent, noticed nothing; he lighted the candles on the card-table. Dumay's attitude made the situation a terrible one for Butscha, for the Latournelles, and, above all, for Madame Dumay, who knew that her husband was capable of shooting Modeste's lover as if he were a mad dog. After dinner, the cashier had gone out for a walk, taking with him two magnificent Pyrenean dogs, whom he suspected of treason, and had, therefore, left with a farmer,

formerly a tenant of Monsieur Mignon's; then, a few minutes before the Latournelles had come in, he had brought his pistols from their place by his bed, and had laid them on the chimney-shelf, without letting Modeste see it. The young girl paid no attention to all these arrangements—strange, to say the least of it.

Though short, thick-set, and battered, with a low voice, and an air of listening to his own words, this Breton, formerly a lieutenant in the Guard, has determination and presence of mind so plainly stamped on his features, that, in twenty years, no man in the army had ever tried to make game of him. His eyes, small and calmly blue, are like two specks of steel. His manners, the expression of his face, his mode of speech, his gait, all suit his short name of Dumay. His strength, which is well known, secures him against any offence. He can kill a man with a blow of his fist; and, in fact, achieved this doughty deed at Botzen, where he found himself in the rear of his company, without any weapon, and face to face with a Saxon.

At this moment, the man's set but gentle countenance was sublimely tragical; his lips, as pale as his face, betrayed convulsive fury subdued by Breton determination; his brow was damp with slight perspiration, visible to all, and understood to be a cold moisture. The notary knew that the upshot of all this might be a scene in an assize court. In fact, the cashier was playing a game for Modeste's sake, where honor, fidelity, and feelings of far more importance than any social ties, were at stake; and it was the outcome of one of those compacts of which, in the event of fatal issues, none but God can be the judge. Most dramas lie in the ideas we form of things. The events which seem to us dramatic are only such as our soul turns to tragedy or comedy, as our own nature tends.

Madame Latournelle and Madame Dumay, charged with keeping watch over Modeste, both had an indescribable artificial manner, a quaver in their voice, which the object of their suspicions did not notice, she seemed so much absorbed by her work. Modeste laid each strand of cotton with an accuracy

that might be the envy of any embroiderer. Her face showed the pleasure she derived from the satin stitch petal that put the finish to a flower. The hunchback, sitting between Madame Latournelle and Gobenheim, was swallowing tears and wondering how he could get round to Modeste, and whisper two words of warning in her ear. Madame Latournelle, by placing herself in front of Madame Mignon, had cut off Modeste, with the diabolical ingenuity of a pious prude. Madame Mignon, silent, blind, and whiter than her usual pallor, plainly betrayed her knowledge of the ordeal to which the girl was to be subjected. Now, at the last moment, perhaps she disapproved of the stratagem, though deeming it necessary. Hence her silence. She was weeping in her heart. Exupère, the trigger of the trap, knew nothing whatever of the piece in which chance had cast him for a part. Gobenheim was as indifferent as Modeste herself seemed to be—a consequence of his nature.

To a spectator in the secret, the contrast between the utter ignorance of one-half of the party, and the tremulous tension of the others, would have been thrilling. In these days, more than ever, novel-writers deal largely in such effects; and they are in their rights, for nature has at all times outdone their skill. In this case, as you will see, social nature—which is nature within nature—was allowing itself the pleasure of making fact more interesting than romance, just as torrents produce effects forbidden to painters, and achieve marvels by arranging or polishing stones so that architects and sculptors are amazed.

It was eight o'clock. At this season of the year it is the hour of the last gleam of twilight. That evening the sky was cloudless, the mild air caressed the earth, flowers breathed their fragrance, the grinding gravel could be heard under the feet of persons returning from their walk. The sea shone like a mirror.

There was so little wind that the candles on the table burned with a steady flame though the windows were half open. The room, the evening, the house—what a setting for

the portrait of this young creature, who at the moment was being studied by her friends with the deep attention of an artist gazing at *Margherita Doni,* one of the glories of the Pitti palace. Was Modeste, a flower enshrined like that of Catullus, worthy of all these precautions?—You have seen the cage: this is the bird.

At the age of twenty, slender and delicately made, like one of the Sirens invented by English painters to grace a Book of Beauty, Modeste, like her mother before her, bears the engaging expression of a grace little appreciated in France, where it is called sentimentality, though among the Germans it is the poetry of the heart suffusing the surface, and displayed in affectation by simpletons, in exquisite manners by sensible girls. Her most conspicuous feature was her pale gold hair, which classed her with the women called, no doubt in memory of Eve, *blondes celestes,* heavenly fair, whose sheeny skin looks like silk paper laid over the flesh, shivering in the winter or reveling in the sunshine of a look, and making the hand envious of the eye. Under this hair, as light as marabout feathers, and worn in ringlets, the brow, so purely formed that it might have been drawn by compasses, is reserved and calm to placidity, though bright with thought; but when or where could a smoother one be found, or more transparently frank? It seems to have a lustre like pearl. Her eyes, of grayish blue, as clear as those of a child, have all a child's mischief and innocence, in harmony with the arch of eyebrows scarcely outlined, as lightly touched in as those painted in Chinese faces. This playful innocence is accentuated by nacreous tones, with blue veins round the eyes and on the temples, a peculiarity of those delicate complexions. Her face, of the oval so often seen in Raphael's Madonnas, is distinguished by the cool, maidenly flush of her cheeks, as tender as a China rose, on which the long lashes of her transparent eyelids cast a play of light and shade. Her throat, bent over her work, and slender to fragility, suggests the sweeping lines dear to Leonardo. A few freckles, like the patches of the past century, show that Modeste is a daughter

Modeste Mignon

of earth, and not one of the creations seen in dreams by the Italian School of Angelico. Lips, full but finely curved, and somewhat satirical in expression, betray a love of pleasure. Her shape, pliant without being frail, would not scare away motherhood, like that of girls who seek to triumph through the unhealthy pressure of stays. Buckram, steel, and stay-lace never improved or formed such serpentine lines of elegance, resembling those of a young poplar swayed by the wind. A pearl-gray dress, long in the waist, and trimmed with cherry-colored gimp, accentuated the pure bust and covered the shoulders, still somewhat thin, over a deep muslin tucker, which betrayed only the outline of the curves where the bosom joins the shoulders. At the sight of this countenance, at once vague and intelligent, with a singular touch of determination given to it by a straight nose with rosy nostrils and firmly-cut outlines—a countenance where the poetry of an almost mystical brow was belied by the voluptuous curve of the mouth—where, in the changing depths of the eyes, candor seemed to fight for the mastery with the most accomplished irony—an observer might have thought that this young girl, whose quick ear caught every sound, whose nose was open to the fragrance of the blue flower of the ideal, must be the arena of a struggle between the poetry that plays round the daily rising of the sun and the labors of the day, between fancy and reality. Modeste was both curious and modest, knowing her fate, and purely chaste, the virgin of Spain rather than of Raphael.

She raised her head on hearing Dumay say to Exupère, "Come here, young man," and seeing them talk together in a corner of the room, she fancied it was about some commission for Paris. She looked at the friends who surrounded her as if astonished at their silence, and exclaimed with a perfectly natural air:

"Well, are you not going to play?" pointing to the green table that Madame Latournelle called the altar.

"Let us begin," said Dumay, after dismissing Exupère.

"Sit there, Butscha!" said Madame Latournelle, placing

the table between the clerk and the group formed by Madame Mignon and her daughter.

"And you—come here," said Dumay to his wife, desiring her to stay near him.

Madame Dumay, a little American of six-and-thirty, secretly wiped away her tears; she was devoted to Modeste, and dreaded a catastrophe.

"You are not lively this evening," said Modeste.

"We are playing," said Gobenheim, sorting his hand.

However interesting the situation may seem, it will be far more so when Dumay's position with regard to Modeste is explained. If the brevity of the style makes the narrative dry, this will be forgiven for the sake of hastening to the end of this scene, and of the need, which rules all dramas, for setting forth the argument.

Dumay—Anne-François-Bernard—born at Vannes, went as a soldier in 1799, joining the army of Italy. His father, a president of the Revolutionary Tribunal, had distinguished himself by so much vigor that the country was too hot to hold the son when his father, a second-rate lawyer, perished on the scaffold after the 9th of Thermidor. His mother died of grief; and Anne, having sold everything he possessed, went off to Italy at the age of twenty-two, just as our armies were defeated. In the department of the Var he met a young man who, for similar reasons, was also in search of glory, thinking the battlefield less dangerous than Provence.

Charles Mignon, the last survivor of the family to whom Paris owes the street and the hôtel built by Cardinal Mignon, had for his father a crafty man, who wished to save his estate of la Bastie, a nice little fief under the Counts of Provence, from the clutches of the Revolution. Like all nervous people in those days, the Comte de la Bastie, now Citizen Mignon, thought it healthier to cut off other heads than to lose his own. This supposed terrorist vanished on the 9th of Thermidor, and was thenceforth placed on the list of *émigrés*. The fief of la Bastie was sold. The pepper-caster towers of the

dishonored château were razed to the ground. Finally, Citizen Mignon himself, discovered at Orange, was killed with his wife and children, with the exception of Charles Mignon, whom he had sent in search of a refuge in the department of the Hautes-Alpes. Charles, stopped by these shocking tidings, awaited quieter times in a valley of Mont Genèvre. There he lived till 1799 on a few louis his father had put into his hand at parting. At last, when he was three-and-twenty, with no fortune but his handsome person—the southern beauty which, in its perfection, is a glorious thing, the type of Antinoüs, Hadrian's famous favorite—he resolved to stake his Provençal daring on the red field of war, regarding his courage as a vocation, as did many another. On his way to headquarters at Nice he met the Breton.

The two infantrymen, thrown together by the similarity of their destiny and the contrast of their nature, drank of the torrent from the same cup, divided their allowance of biscuit, and were sergeants by the time peace was signed after the battle of Marengo.

When war broke out again, Charles Mignon got leave to be transferred to the cavalry, and then lost sight of his comrade. The last of the Mignons of la Bastie was, in 1812, an officer of the Legion of Honor, and Major of a cavalry regiment, hoping to be reinstated as Comte de la Bastie and made Colonel by the Emperor. Then, taken prisoner by the Russians, he was sent with many more to Siberia. His traveling companion was a poor lieutenant, in whom he recognized Anne Dumay, with no decoration, brave indeed, but hapless, like the millions of rank-and-file with worsted epaulettes, the web of men on which Napoleon painted the picture of his Empire. In Siberia, to pass the time, the lieutenant-colonel taught his comrade arithmetic and writing, for education had seemed unimportant to his Scævola parent. Charles found in his first traveling companion one of those rare hearts to whom he could pour out all his griefs while confiding all his joys.

The Provençal had, ere this, met the fate which awaits every handsome young fellow. In 1804, at Frankfort-on-the-Main,

he was adored by Bettina Wallenrod, the only daughter of a banker, and married her with all the more enthusiasm because she was rich, one of the beauties of the town, and he was still only a lieutenant with no fortune but the most uncertain prospects of a soldier of that time. Old Wallenrod, a decayed German baron—bankers are always barons—was enchanted to think that the handsome lieutenant was the sole representative of the Mignons of la Bastie, and approved the affections of the fair Bettina, whom a painter—for there was a painter then at Frankfort—had taken for his model of an ideal figure of Germany. Wallenrod, who already thought of his grandsons as Comtes de la Bastie-Wallenrod, invested in the French funds a sufficient sum to secure to his daughter thirty thousand francs a year. This dower made a very small hole in his coffers, seeing how small a capital was required. The Empire, following a practice not uncommon among debtors, rarely paid the half-yearly dividends. Charles, indeed, was somewhat alarmed at this investment, for he had not so much faith in the Imperial Eagle as the German baron had. The phenomenon of belief, or of admiration, which is only a transient form of belief, can hardly exist in illicit companionship with the idol. An engineer dreads the machine which the traveler admires, and Napoleon's officers were the stokers of his locomotive when they were not the fuel. Baron von Wallenrod-Tustall-Bartenstild then promised to help the young people. Charles loved Bettina Wallenrod as much as she loved him, and that is saying a great deal; but when a Provençal is fired, anything seems natural to him in the matter of feeling. How could he help worshiping a golden-haired woman who had stepped out of a picture by Albert Dürer, an angel of good temper, with a fortune famous in Frankfort?

So Charles had four children, of whom only two daughters were alive at the time when he poured out his sorrows on the Breton's heart. Without knowing them, Dumay was fond of these two little girls, the effect of the sympathy so well understood by Charlet, who shows us the soldier as fatherly to every child. The elder, named Bettina Caroline, was born

in 1805; the second, Marie Modeste, in 1808. The unhappy lieutenant-colonel, having had no news of those he loved, came back on foot in 1814, with the lieutenant for his companion, all across Russia and Prussia. The two friends, for whom any difference of rank had ceased to exist, arrived at Frankfort just as Napoleon landed at Cannes. Charles found his wife at Frankfort, but in mourning; she had had the grief of losing the father who adored her, and who longed always to see her smiling, even by his deathbed. Old Wallenrod did not survive the overthrow of the Empire. At the age of seventy-two he had speculated largely in cotton, believing still in Napoleon's genius, and not knowing that genius is as often the slave of events as their master.

The last of the Wallenrods, the true Wallenrod-Tustall-Bartenstild, had bought almost as many bales of cotton as the Emperor had sacrificed men during his tremendous campaign in France.

"I am tying in cotton" (I am dying in clover), said this father to his daughter, for he was of the Goriot species, trying to beguile her of her grief, which terrified him, "and I tie owing noting to noboty,"—and the Franco-German died struggling with the French language his daughter loved.

Charles Mignon, happy to have saved his wife and daughters from this double shipwreck, now returned to Paris, where the Emperor made him Lieutenant-Colonel of the Cuirassiers of the Guard, and Commander of the Legion of Honor. The Colonel at last was General and Count, after Napoleon's first success; but his dream was drowned in torrents of blood at Waterloo. He was slightly wounded, and retired to the Loire, leaving Tours before the troops were disbanded.

In the spring of 1816 Charles realized the capital of his thirty thousand francs a year, which gave him about four hundred thousand francs, and decided on going to make his fortune in America, leaving a country where persecution already pressed hardly on Napoleon's soldiers. He went from Paris to le Havre, accompanied by Dumay, whose life he had saved in one of the frequent chances of war, by taking him

behind him on his horse in the confusion that ended the day of Waterloo. Dumay shared the Colonel's opinions and despondency. Charles, to whom the Breton clung like a dog, for the poor infantryman worshiped the two little girls, thought that Dumay's habits of obedience and discipline, his honesty and his attachment, would make him a servant not less faithful than useful. He therefore proposed to him to take service under him in private life. Dumay was very happy to find himself adopted into a family with whom he hoped to live like mistletoe on an oak.

While waiting an opportunity of sailing, choosing among the ships, and meditating on the chances offered in the various ports of their destination, the Colonel heard rumors of the splendid fortunes that the peace held in store for le Havre. While listening to a discussion between two of the natives, he saw a means of making his fortune, and set up forthwith as a shipowner, a banker, and a country gentleman. He invested two hundred thousand francs in land and houses, and freighted a ship for New York with a cargo of French silks bought at Lyons at a low figure. Dumay sailed on the vessel as his agent. While the Colonel was settling himself with his family in the handsomest house in the Rue Royale, and studying the science of banking with all the energy and prodigious acumen of a Provençal, Dumay made two fortunes, for he returned with a cargo of cotton bought for a mere song. This transaction produced an enormous capital for Mignon's business. He then purchased the villa at Ingouville, and rewarded Dumay by giving him a small house in the Rue Royale.

The worthy Breton had brought back with him from New York with his bales a pretty little wife, who had been chiefly attracted by his nationality as a Frenchman. Miss Grummer owned about four thousand dollars, twenty thousand francs, which Dumay invested in his Colonel's business. Dumay, now the *alter ego* of the shipowner, very soon learned book-keeping, the science which, to use his phrase, distinguished the sergeant-majors of trade. This guileless soldier, whom

fortune had neglected for twenty years, thought himself the happiest man in the world when he saw himself master of a house—which his employer's munificence furnished very prettily—of twelve hundred francs a year of interest on his capital, and of three thousand six hundred francs in salary. Never in his dreams had Lieutenant Dumay hoped for such prosperity; but he was even happier in feeling himself the hub of the richest merchant's house in le Havre.

Madame Dumay had the sorrow of losing all her children at their birth, and the disasters of her last confinement left her no hope of having any; she therefore attached herself to the two Mignon girls as affectionately as Dumay, who would not have loved his own children so well. Madame Dumay, the child of agriculturists, accustomed to a thrifty life, found two thousand four hundred francs enough for herself and her housekeeping. Thus, year by year, Dumay put two thousand and some hundred francs into the Mignon concern. When the master made up the annual balance, he added to the cashier's credit a bonus in proportion to the business done. In 1824 the sum to the cashier's account amounted to fifty-eight thousand francs. Then it was that Charles Mignon, Comte de la Bastie, a title that was never mentioned, crowned his cashier's joy by giving him a lease of the Chalet, where we now find Modeste and her mother.

Madame Mignon's deplorable condition had its cause in the catastrophe to which Charles' absence was due, for her husband had left her a still handsome woman. It had taken three years of sorrow to destroy the gentle German lady, but it was one of those sorrows which are like a worm lying at the heart of a fine fruit. The sum-total of her woes is easily stated: Two children who died young had stamped a double *ci-gît* on a soul which could never forget. Charles' captivity in Siberia had been to this loving heart a daily death. The disasters of the great Wallenrod house, and the unhappy banker's death on his empty money-bags, coming in the midst of Bettina's suspense about her husband, was a final blow. The joy of seeing him again almost killed this German

floweret. Then came the second overthrow of the Empire, and their plans for emigration had been like relapses of the same fit of fever.

At last ten years of constant prosperity, the amusements of her home-life, the handsomest house in le Havre, the dinners, balls, and entertainments given by the successful merchant, the magnificence of the Villa Mignon, the immense respect and high esteem enjoyed by her husband, with the undivided affection of this man, who responded to perfect love by love equally perfect,—all these had reconciled the poor woman to life.

Then, at the moment when all her doubts were at rest, and she looked forward to a calm evening after her stormy day, a mysterious disaster, buried in the heart of the double household, and presently to be related, came like a summons from misfortune. In 1826, in the midst of a party, when all the town was ready to return Charles Mignon as its deputy, three letters, from New York, London, and Paris, came like three hammer-strokes on the glass house of Prosperity. In ten minutes ruin swooped down with vulture's wings on this unheard-of good fortune like the frost on the Grande Armée in 1812. In one night which he spent with Dumay over the books, Charles Mignon was prepared for the worst. Everything he possessed, not excepting the furniture, would avail to pay everybody.

"Le Havre," said the Colonel to the Lieutenant, "shall never see me in the mud. Dumay, I will take your sixty thousand francs at six per cent——"

"At three, Colonel."

"At nothing, then," said Charles peremptorily. "I make you my partner in my new enterprise. The *Modeste,* which is no longer mine, sails to-morrow; the captain takes me with him. You—I place you in charge of my wife and daughter. I shall never write. No news is good news."

Dumay, still but a lieutenant, had not asked his Colonel by a word what his purpose was.

"I suspect," said he to Latournelle with a knowing air, "that the Colonel has laid his plans."

On the following morning, at break of day, he saw his master safe on board the good ship *Modeste,* bound for Constantinople. Standing on the vessel's poop, the Breton said to the Provençal:

"What are your last orders, Colonel?"

"That no man ever goes near the Chalet!" cried the father, with difficulty restraining a tear. "Dumay, guard my last child as a bull-dog might. Death to any one who may try to tempt my second daughter! Fear nothing, not even the scaffold. I would meet you there!"

"Colonel, do your business in peace. I understand. You will find Mademoiselle Modeste as you leave her, or I shall be dead! You know me, and you know our two Pyrenean dogs. No one shall get at your daughter. Forgive me for using so many words."

The two soldiers embraced as men who had learned to appreciate each other in the heart of Siberia.

The same day the *Courrier du Havre* published this terrible, simple, vigorous, and honest leading paragraph:—

"The house of Charles Mignon has suspended payment, but the undersigned liquidators pledge themselves to pay all the outstanding debts. Bearers of bills at date can at once discount them. The value of the landed estate will completely cover current accounts.

"This notice is issued for the honor of the house, and to prevent any shock to general credit on the Havre Exchange.

"Monsieur Charles Mignon sailed this morning in the *Modeste* for Asia Minor, having left a power of attorney to enable us to realize every form of property, even landed estate.

"DUMAY, liquidator for the banking account.
"LATOURNELLE, notary, liquidator for the houses and land in town and country.
"GOBENHEIM, liquidator for commercial bills."

Latournelle owed his prosperity to Monsieur Mignon's kindness; he had, in 1817, lent the notary a hundred thousand francs to buy the best business in le Havre. The poor lawyer, without any pecuniary resources, was by that time forty years old; he had been a head-clerk for ten years, and looked forward to being a clerk for the rest of his days. He was the only man in le Havre whose devotion could compare with Dumay's, for Gobenheim took advantage of this bankruptcy to carry on Mignon's connection and business, which enabled him to start his little banking concern. While universal regret was expressed on 'Change, on the Quays, and in every home; while praises of a blameless, honorable, and beneficent man were on every lip, Latournelle and Dumay, as silent and as busy as emmets, were selling, realizing, paying, and settling up. Vilquin gave himself airs of generosity, and bought the villa, the town-house, and a farm, and Latournelle took advantage of this first impulse to extract a good price from Vilquin.

Every one wanted to call on Madame and Mademoiselle Mignon, but they had obeyed Charles and taken refuge at the Chalet the very morning of his departure, of which at the first moment they knew nothing. Not to be shaken in his purpose by their grief, the courageous banker had kissed his wife and daughter in their sleep. Three hundred cards were left at the door. A fortnight later the most complete oblivion, as Charles had prophesied, showed the two women the wisdom and dignity of the step enjoined on them.

Dumay appointed representatives of his master at New York, London, and Paris. He followed up the liquidation of the three banking houses to which Mignon's ruin was due, and between 1826 and 1828 recovered five hundred thousand francs, the eighth part of Charles' fortune. In obedience to the orders drawn up the night before his departure, Dumay forwarded this sum at the beginning of 1828, through the house of Mongenod at New York, to be placed to Monsieur Mignon's credit. All this was done with military punctuality, excepting with regard to the retention of thirty thousand

francs for the personal needs of Madame and Mademoiselle Mignon. This, which Charles had ordered, Dumay did not carry out. The Breton sold his house in the town for twenty thousand francs, and gave this to Madame Mignon, reflecting that the more money his Colonel could command, the sooner he would return.

"For lack of thirty thousand francs a man sometimes is lost," said he to Latournelle, who bought the house at his friend's price; and there the inhabitants of the Chalet could always find rooms.

This, to the famous house of Mignon, le Havre, was the outcome of the crisis which, in 1825-26, upset the principal centres of commerce, and caused—if you remember that hurricane—the ruin of several Paris bankers, one of them the President of the Chamber of Commerce. It is intelligible that this tremendous overthrow, closing a civic reign of ten years, might have been a deathblow to Bettina Wallenrod, who once more found herself parted from her husband, knowing nothing of his fate, apparently as full of peril and adventure as Siberian exile; but the trouble that was really bringing her to the grave was to these visible griefs what an ill-starred child is to the commonplace troubles of a family—a child that gnaws and devours its home. The fatal stone that had struck this mother's heart was a tombstone in the little cemetery of Ingouville, on which may be read:

BETTINA CAROLINE MIGNON
AGED TWO-AND-TWENTY
PRAY FOR HER!
1827.

This inscription is for the girl who lies there what many an epitaph is for the dead—a table of contents to an unknown book. Here is the book in its terrible epitome, and it may explain the pledge demanded and given in the parting words of the colonel and subaltern.

A young man, extremely handsome, named Georges d'Estourny, came to le Havre on the common pretext of seeing the sea, and he saw Caroline Mignon. A man of some pretence to fashion, and from Paris, never lacks some introductions; he was therefore invited by the intervention of a friend of the Mignons to an entertainment at Ingouville. He fell very much in love with Caroline and her fortune, and schemed for a happy issue. At the end of three months he had played every trick of the seducer, and run away with Caroline. The father of a family who has two daughters ought no more to admit a young man to his house without knowing him than he should allow books or newspapers to lie about without having read them. The innocence of a girl is like milk which is turned by a thunder-clap, by an evil smell, by a hot day, or even by a breath.

When he read his eldest daughter's farewell letter, Charles Mignon made Madame Dumay set out instantly for Paris. The family alleged the need for a change of air suddenly prescribed by the family doctor, who lent himself to this necessary pretext; but this could not keep the town from gossiping about her absence.

"What, such a strong girl, with the complexion of a Spaniard, and hair like jet!—She, consumptive!"

"Yes—so they say. She did something imprudent——"

"Ah, ha!" cried some Vilquin.

"She came in from a ride bathed in perspiration and drank iced water, at least so Dr. Troussenard says."

By the time Madame Dumay returned, the troubles of the Mignons were an exhausted subject; no one thought anything more of Caroline's absence or the reappearance of the cashier's wife.

At the beginning of 1827 the newspapers were full of the trial of Georges d'Estourny, who was proved guilty of constant cheating at play. This young pirate vanished abroad without thinking any more about Mademoiselle Mignon, whose money value was destroyed by the bankruptcy at le Havre. Before long Caroline knew that she was deserted, and her father a

ruined man. She came home in a fearful state of mortal illness, and died a few days afterwards at the Chalet. Her death, at any rate, saved her reputation. The malady spoken of by Monsieur Mignon at the time of his daughter's elopement was very generally believed in, and the medical orders which had sent her off, it was said, to Nice.

To the very last the mother hoped to save her child. Bettina was her darling, as Modeste was her father's. There was something touching in this preference: Bettina was the image of Charles, as Modeste was of her mother. They perpetuated their love in their children. Caroline, a Provençal, inherited from her father the beautiful blue-black hair, like a raven's wing, which we admire in the daughters of the south, the hazel, almond-shaped eye as bright as a star, the olive complexion with the golden glow of a velvety fruit, the arched foot, the Spanish bust that swells beneath the bodice. And the father and mother were alike proud of the charming contrast of the two sisters.

"A demon and an angel!" people used to say, without ill meaning, though it was prophetic.

After spending a month in tears in her room, where she insisted on staying and seeing no one, the poor German lady came forth with her eyes seriously injured. Before she lost her sight she went, in spite of all her friends, to look at Caroline's tomb. This last image remained bright in her darkness, as the red spectre of the last object we have seen remains when we shut our eyes in bright daylight. After this terrible and twofold disaster, Dumay, though he could not be more devoted, was more anxious than ever about Modeste, now an only child, though her father knew it not. Madame Dumay, who was crazy about Modeste, like all women who have no children, overpowered her with her deputy motherhood, but without disobeying her husband's orders. Dumay was distrustful of female friendships. His injunctions were absolute.

"If ever any man, of whatever age or rank, speaks to Modeste," said Dumay, "if he looks at her, casts sheep's eyes at

her, he is a dead man. I will blow his brains out and surrender myself to the Public Prosecutor. My death may save her. If you do not wish to see me cut my throat, fill my place unfailingly when I am in town."

For three years Dumay had examined his pistols every night. He seemed to have included in his oath the two Pyrenean dogs, remarkably intelligent beasts; one slept in the house, the other was sentinel in a kennel that he never came out of, and he never barked; but the minute when those dogs should set their teeth in an intruder would be a terrible one for him.

The life may now be imagined which the mother and daughter led at the Chalet. Monsieur and Madame Latournelle, frequently accompanied by Gobenheim, came almost every evening to visit their friends and play a rubber. Conversation would turn on business at le Havre, on the trivial events of country town life. They left between nine and ten. Modeste went to put her mother to bed; they said their prayers together, they talked over their hopes, they spoke of the dearly loved traveler. After kissing her mother, Modeste went to her own room at about ten o'clock. Next morning Modeste dressed her mother with the same care, the same prayers, the same little chat. To Modeste's honor, from the day when her mother's terrible infirmity deprived her of one of her senses, she made herself her waiting-maid, and always with the same solicitude at every hour, without wearying of it, or finding it monotonous. Her affection was supreme, and always ready, with a sweetness rare in young girls, and that was highly appreciated by those who saw her tenderness. And so, Modeste was, in the eyes of the Latournelles and of Monsieur and Madame Dumay, the jewel I have described. Between breakfast and dinner, on sunny days, Madame Mignon and Madame Dumay took a little walk as far as the shore, Modeste assisting, for the blind woman needed the support of two arms.

A month before the scene in which this digression falls as a parenthesis, Madame Mignon had held council with her only friends, Madame Latournelle, the notary, and Dumay,

while Madame Dumay was giving Modeste the little diversion of a long walk.

"Listen, my friends," said the blind woman, "my daughter is in love. I feel it; I see it. A strange change has come over her, and I cannot think how you have failed to observe it . . ."

"Bless my stars!" the Lieutenant exclaimed.

"Do not interrupt me, Dumay. For the last two months Modeste has dressed herself with care as if she were going to meet some one. She has become excessively particular about her shoes; she wants her foot to look nice, and scolds Madame Gobain the shoemaker. Some days the poor child sits gloomy and watchful, as if she expected somebody; her voice is short and sharp, as though by questioning her I broke in on her expectancy, her secret hopes; and then, if that somebody has been——"

"Bless my stars!"

"Sit down, Dumay," said the lady. "Well, then Modeste is gay. Oh! you do not see that she is gay; you cannot discern these shades, too subtle for eyes to see that have all nature to look at. Her cheerfulness betrays itself in the tones of her voice, accents which I can detect and account for. Modeste, instead of sitting still and dreaming, expends her light activity in flighty movement. In short, she is happy! There is a tone of thanksgiving even in the ideas she utters. Oh, my friends, I have learned to know happiness as well as grief. By the kiss my poor Modeste gives me I can guess what is going on in her mind; whether she has had what she was expecting, or is uneasy. There are many shades in kisses, even in those of a young girl—for Modeste is innocence itself, but it is not ignorant innocence. Though I am blind, my affection is clairvoyant, and I implore you—watch my daughter."

On this, Dumay, quite ferocious, the notary as a man who is bent on solving a riddle, Madame Latournelle as a duenna who has been cheated, and Madame Dumay, who shared her husband's fears,—all constituted themselves spies over Mo-

deste. Modeste was never alone for a moment. Dumay spent whole nights under the windows, wrapped in a cloak like a jealous Spaniard; still, armed as he was with military sagacity, he could find no accusing clue. Unless she were in love with the nightingales in Vilquin's Park, or some goblin prince, Modeste could have seen no one, could neither have received nor given a signal. Madame Dumay, who never went to bed till she had seen Modeste asleep, hovered about the roads on the high ground near the Chalet with a vigilance equal to her husband's. Under the eyes of these four Argus, the blameless child, whose smallest actions were reported and analyzed, was so absolutely acquitted of any criminal proceedings, that the friends suspected Madame Mignon of a craze, a monomania. It devolved on Madame Latournelle, who herself took Modeste to church and home again, to tell the mother that she was under a mistake.

"Modeste," said she, "is a very enthusiastic young person; she has passions for this one's poetry and that one's prose. You could not see what an impression was made on her by that executioner's piece (a phrase of Butscha's, who lent wit without any return to his benefactress), called *le Dernier Jour d'un condamné;* but she seemed to me beside herself with her admiration of that Monsieur Hugo. I cannot think where that sort of people (Victor Hugo, Lamartine, and Byron were what Madame Latournelle meant by *that sort*) go to find their ideas. The little thing talked to me about *Childe Harold;* I did not choose to have the worst of it; I was fool enough to set to work to read it that I might be able to argue with her. I don't know whether it is to be set down to the translation, but my heart heaved, my eyes were dizzy. I could not get on with it. It is full of howling comparisons, of rocks that faint away, of the lavas of war!

"Of course, as it is an Englishman on his travels, one must expect something queer, but this is really too much! You fancy you are in Spain, and he carries you up into the clouds above the Alps; he makes the torrents and the stars speak; and then there are too many virgins! You get sick of them.

In short, after Napoleon's campaigns we have had enough of flaming shot and sounding brass which roll on from page to page. Modeste tells me that all this pathos comes from the translator, and I ought to read the English. But I am not going to learn English for Lord Byron when I would not learn it for Exupère! I much prefer the romances of Ducray-Duménil to these English romances! I am too thoroughly Norman to fall in love with everything that comes from abroad, and especially from England——"

Madame Mignon, notwithstanding her perpetual mourning, could not help smiling at the idea of Madame Latournelle reading *Childe Harold*. The stern lady accepted this smile as approbation of her doctrines.

"And so, my dear Madame Mignon, you mistake Modeste's imaginings, the result of her reading, for love affairs. She is twenty. At that age a girl loves herself. She dresses to see herself dressed. Why, I used to make my little sister, who is dead now, put on a man's hat, and we played at gentleman and lady. . . . You, at Frankfort, had a happy girlhood, but let us be just: Modeste here has no amusements. In spite of our readiness to meet her lightest wishes, she knows that she is guarded, and the life she leads has little pleasure to offer a girl who could not, as she can, find something to divert her in books. Take my word for it, she loves no one but you. Think yourself lucky that she falls in love with nobody but Lord Byron's corsairs, Walter Scott's romantic heroes, or your Germans, Count Egmont, Werther, Schiller, and all the other *ers*."

"Well, madame?" said Dumay respectfully, alarmed by Madame Mignon's silence.

"Modeste is not merely ready for love; she loves somebody," said the mother obstinately.

"Madame, my life is at stake, and you will no doubt allow me—not for my own sake, but for my poor wife's and for the Colonel's, and all our sakes—to try to find out which is mistaken—the watch-dog or the mother."

"It is you, Dumay! Oh, if I could but look my daughter in the face!" said the poor blind woman.

"But who is there that she can love?" replied Madame Latournelle. "As for us—I can answer for my Exupère."

"It cannot be Gobenheim, whom we hardly see for nine hours out of the week since the Colonel went away. Besides, he is not thinking of Modeste—that crown-piece made man! His uncle, Gobenheim-Keller, told him, 'Get rich enough to marry a Keller!' With that for a programme, there is no fear that he will even know of what sex Modeste is. Those are all the men we see here. I do not count Butscha, poor little hunchback. I love him; he is your Dumay, madame," he said to the notary's wife. "Butscha knows very well that if he glanced at Modeste it would cost him a combing *à la mode de Vannes*.—Not a soul ever comes near us. Madame Latournelle, who since—since your misfortune, comes to take Modeste to church and bring her home again, has watched her carefully these last days during the Mass, and has seen nothing suspicious about her. And then, if I must tell you everything, I myself have raked the paths round the house for the last month, and I have always found them in the morning with no footmarks."

"Rakes are not costly nor difficult to use," said the German lady.

"And the dogs?" asked Dumay.

"Lovers can find sops for them," replied Madame Mignon.

"I could blow out my own brains if you are right, for I should be done for," cried Dumay.

"And why, Dumay?"

"Madame, I could not meet the Colonel's eye if he were not to find his daughter, especially now that she is his only child; and as pure, as virtuous as she was when he said to me on board the ship, 'Do not let the fear of the scaffold stop you, Dumay, when Modeste's honor is at stake.'"

"I know you both—how like you!" said Madame Mignon, much moved.

"I will wager my eternal salvation that Modeste is as innocent as she was in her cradle," said Madame Dumay.

"Oh, I will know all about it," replied Dumay, "if Madame la Comtesse will allow me to try a plan, for old soldiers are knowing in stratagems."

"I allow you to do anything that may clear up the matter without injuring our last surviving child."

"And what will you do, Anne," said his wife, "to find out a young girl's secret when it is so closely kept?"

"All of you obey me exactly," said the Lieutenant, "for you must all help."

This brief account, which, if elaborately worked up, would have furnished forth a complete picture of domestic life—how many families will recognize in it the events of their own home!—is enough to give a clue to the importance of the little details previously given of the persons and circumstances of this evening, when the Lieutenant had undertaken to cope with a young girl, and to drag from the recesses of her heart a passion detected by her blind mother.

An hour went by in ominous calm, broken only by the hieroglyphical phrases of the whist players: "Spade!—Trump!—Cut!—Have we the honors?—Two trebles!—Eight all!—Who deals?"—phrases representing in these days the great emotions of the aristocracy of Europe. Modeste stitched, without any surprise at her mother's taciturnity. Madame Mignon's pocket-handkerchief slipped off her lap on to the floor; Butscha flew to pick it up. He was close to Modeste, and as he rose said in her ear, "Be on your guard!"

Modeste raised astonished eyes, and their light, pointed darts as it seemed, filled the hunchback with ineffable joy.

"She loves no one," said the poor fellow to himself, and he rubbed his hands hard enough to flay them.

At this moment Exupère flew through the garden and into the house, rushing into the drawing-room like a whirlwind, and said in Dumay's ear, "Here is the young man!"

Dumay rose, seized his pistols, and went out.

"Good God! Supposing he kills him!" cried Madame Dumay, who burst into tears.

"But what is going on?" asked Modeste, looking at her friends with an air of perfect candor, and without any alarm.

"Something about a young man who prowls round the Chalet!" cried Madame Latournelle.

"What then?" said Modeste. "Why should Dumay kill him?"

"*Sancta simplicitas!*" said Butscha, looking at his master as proudly as Alexander gazes at Babylon in Lebrun's picture.

"Where are you going, Modeste?" asked her mother, as her daughter was leaving the room.

"To get everything ready for you to go to bed, mamma," replied Modeste, in a voice as clear as the notes of a harmonica.

"You have had all your trouble for nothing," said Butscha to Dumay when he came in.

"Modeste is as saintly as the Virgin on our altar!" cried Madame Latournelle.

"Ah, good Heavens! Such agitation is too much for me," said the cashier. "And yet I am a strong man."

"I would give twenty-five sous to understand one word of what you are at this evening," said Gobenheim; "you all seem to me to have gone mad."

"And yet a treasure is at stake," said Butscha, standing on tiptoe to speak into Gobenheim's ear.

"Unfortunately, I am almost positive of the truth of what I say," repeated the mother.

"Then it now lies with you, madame," said Dumay quietly, "to prove that we are wrong."

When he found that nothing was involved but Modeste's reputation, Gobenheim took his hat, bowed, and went away, carrying off ten sous, and regarding a fresh rubber as hopeless.

"Exupère, and you, Butscha, leave us," said Madame Latournelle. "Go down to the town. You will be in time to see one piece; I will treat you to the play."

As soon as Madame Mignon was left with her four friends, Madame Latournelle glanced at Dumay, who, being a Breton, understood the mother's persistency, and then at her husband fidgeting with the cards, and thought herself justified in speaking.

"Come, Madame Mignon, tell us what decisive evidence has struck your ear?"

"Oh, my dear friend, if you were a musician, you, like me, would have heard Modeste's tone when she sings of love."

The piano belonging to the two sisters was one of the few feminine luxuries among the furniture brought from the town-house to the Chalet. Modeste had mitigated some tedium by studying without a master. She was a born musician, and played to cheer her mother. She sang with natural grace the German airs her mother taught her. From this instruction and this endeavor had resulted the phenomenon, not uncommon in natures prompted by a vocation, that Modeste unconsciously composed purely melodic strains, as such composition is possible without a knowledge of harmony. Melody is to music what imagery and feeling are to poetry, a flower that may blossom spontaneously. All nations have had popular melodies before the introduction of harmony. Botany came after flowers. Thus Modeste, without having learned anything of the technique of painting beyond what she had gathered from seeing her sister work in water-colors, could stand enchanted before a picture by Raphael, Titian, Rubens, Murillo, Rembrandt, Albert Dürer, or Holbein, that is to say, the highest ideal of each nation. Now, for about a month, Modeste had more especially burst into nightingale songs, into new strains so poetical as to arouse her mother's attention, surprised as she was to find Modeste bent on composition and trying airs to unfamiliar words.

"If your suspicions have no other foundation," said Latournelle to Madame Mignon, "I pity your sensitiveness."

"When a young girl sings in Brittany," said Dumay, now grave again, "the lover is very near."

"I will let you overhear Modeste improvising," said the mother, "and you will see!——"

"Poor child!" said Madame Dumay. "If she could but know of our anxiety, she would be in despair; and she would tell us the truth, especially if she knew all it meant to Dumay."

"To-morrow, my friends, I will question Modeste," said Madame Mignon; "and perhaps I shall achieve more by affection than you have gained by ruse."

Was the comedy of the "Ill-guarded Daughter" being enacted here, as it is everywhere and at all times, while these worthy Bartolos, these spies, these vigilant watch-dogs failed to scent, to guess, to detect the lover, the conspiracy, the smoke of the fire?

This was not the consequence of any defiance between a prisoner and her jailers, between the tyranny of the dungeon and the liberty of the captive, but merely the eternal repetition of the first drama played as the curtain rose on the new Creation: Eve in Paradise. Which, in this case, was right—the mother or the watch-dog?

None of the persons about Modeste understood the girl's heart—for, be assured, the soul and the face were in unison. Modeste had transplanted her life into a world of which the existence is as completely denied in our days as the New World of Christopher Columbus was denied in the sixteenth century. Fortunately, she could be silent, or she would have been thought mad.

We must first explain the influence that past events had had on the girl. Two especially had formed her character, as they had awakened her intelligence. Monsieur and Madame Mignon, startled by the disaster that had come upon Bettina, had, before their bankruptcy, resolved on seeing Modeste married, and their choice fell on the son of a wealthy banker, a native of Hamburg, who had settled at le Havre in 1815, and who was under some obligations to them. This young man—Francisque Althor—the dandy of le Havre, handsome in the style which captivates the philistine, what the English

call a heavy-weight—florid healthy coloring, firm flesh, and square shoulders—threw over his bride elect, at the news of their disaster, so completely that he had never since set eyes on Modeste, or on Madame Mignon, or on the Dumays. Latournelle having made so bold as to speak to the father, Jacob Althor, on the subject, the old German had shrugged his shoulders, and replied, "I do not know what you mean."

This reply, repeated to Modeste to give her experience, was a lesson she understood all the better because Latournelle and Dumay made voluminous comments on this base desertion. Charles Mignon's two daughters, spoiled children as they were, rode, had their own horses and servants, and enjoyed fatal liberty. Modeste, finding herself in command of a recognized lover, had allowed Francisque to kiss her hand, and put his arm round her to help her to mount; she had accepted flowers, and the trifling gifts of affection which are the burden of paying court to a young lady; she worked him a purse, believing in bonds of that kind, so strong to noble souls, but mere cobwebs to the Gobenheims, Vilquins, and Althors.

In the course of the spring, after Madame Mignon and her daughter had moved into the Chalet, Francisque Althor went to dine with the Vilquins. On catching sight of Modeste beyond the wall of the lawn, he looked away. Six weeks after he married Mademoiselle Vilquin—the eldest. Then Modeste learned that she, handsome, young, and well born, had for three months been simply Mademoiselle Million. So Modeste's poverty, which was of course known, was a sentinel which guarded the ways to the Chalet quite as well as the Dumays' prudence and the Latournelles' vigilance. Mademoiselle Mignon was never mentioned but with insulting pity: "Poor girl! what will become of her? She will die an old maid."—"What a hard lot! After seeing all the world at her feet, and having a chance of marrying Althor, to find that no one will have anything to say to her?"—"Such a life of luxury, my dear! and to have sunk to penury!"

Nor were these insults spoken in private and only guessed

by Modeste; more than once she heard them uttered by the young men and girls of the town when walking at Ingouville, who, knowing that Madame and Mademoiselle Mignon lived at the Chalet, discussed them audibly as they went past the pretty little house. Some of the Vilquins' friends wondered that these ladies could bear to live so near the home of their former splendor. Modeste, sitting behind closed shutters, often heard such impertinence as this: "I cannot think how they can live there!" one would say to another, walking round the garden, perhaps to help the Vilquins to be rid of their tenants. "What do they live on?—What can they do there?—The old woman is gone blind!—Is Mademoiselle Mignon still pretty?—Ah, she has no horses now. How dashing she used to be!"

As she heard this savage nonsense spoken by envy, foul-mouthed and surly, and tilting at the past, many girls would have felt the blood rise to their very brow; others would have wept, some would have felt a surge of rage; but Modeste smiled as we smile at a theatre, hearing actors speak. Her pride could not descend to the level which such words, rising from below, could reach.

The other event was even more serious than this mercenary desertion. Bettina-Caroline had died in her sister's arms; Modeste had nursed her with the devotion of a woman, with the inquisitiveness of a maiden imagination. The two girls, in the watches of the night, had exchanged many a confidence. What dramatic interest hung round Bettina in the eyes of her innocent sister! Bettina knew passion only as misfortune; she was dying because she had loved. Between two girls every man, wretch though he be, is a lover. Passion is the one thing really absolute in human life; it will always have its own. Georges d'Estourny, a gambler, dissipated and guilty, always dwelt in the memory of these two young things as the Parisian dandy of the Havre parties, the cynosure of every woman—Bettina believed that she had snatched him from Madame Vilquin's flirtations—and, to crown all, Bettina's successful lover. In a young girl her worship is stronger

than social reprobation. In Bettina's mind, justice had erred; how should she have condemned a young man by whom she had been loved for six months, loved with passion in the mysterious retreat where Georges hid her in Paris, that he might preserve his liberty? Thus, Bettina, in her death, had inoculated her sister with love.

The sisters had often discussed the great drama of passion, to which imagination lends added importance; and the dead girl had taken Modeste's purity with her to her grave, leaving her not perhaps all-knowing, but, at any rate, all-curious. At the same time, remorse had often set sharp pangs in Bettina's heart, and she lavished warnings on her sister. In the midst of her revelations, she never failed to preach obedience in Modeste, absolute obedience to her family. On the eve of her death, she implored her sister to remember the pillow she had soaked with her tears, and never to imitate the conduct her sufferings could scarcely expiate. Bettina accused herself of having brought the lightning down on those dear to her; she died in despair at not receiving her father's forgiveness. In spite of the consolations of religion, which was softened by such deep repentance, Bettina's last words, in a heartrending cry, were, "Father! Father!"

"Never give your heart but with your hand," said she to Modeste, an hour before her death; "and, above all, accept no attentions without my mother's consent or papa's."

These words, touching in their simple truth, and spoken in the hour of death, found an echo in Modeste's mind, all the more because Bettina made her take a solemn vow. The poor girl, with prophetic insight, drew from under her pillow a ring on which she had had engraved *Pense à Bettina*, 1827—"Remember Bettina"—instead of a motto, sending it by the hand of her faithful servant Françoise Cochet, to be done in the town. A few minutes before she breathed her last sigh, she placed this ring on her sister's finger, begging her to wear it till she should be married. Thus, between these two girls there had been a strange succession of acute remorse and artless descriptions of that brief summer which had been so

soon followed by the autumn winds of desertion, while tears, regrets, and memories were constantly overruled by a dread of evil.

And yet this drama of the young creature seduced, and returning to die of a dreadful disorder under the roof of elegant poverty, the meanness of the Vilquins' son-in-law, and her mother's blindness, resulting from her griefs, only account for the surface of Modeste's character, with which the Dumays and the Latournelles had to be content, for no devotion can fill the mother's place. This monotonous life in the pretty Chalet, among the beautiful flowers grown by Dumay; these habits, as regular as the working of a clock; this provincial propriety; these rubbers at cards by which she sat knitting; this silence, only broken by the moaning of the sea at the equinoxes; this monastic peace covered the stormiest kind of life—the life of ideas, the life of the spiritual world.

We sometimes wonder at the lapses of young girls, but that is when they have no blind mother to sound with her stick the depths of the maiden heart undermined by the caverns of fancy.

The Dumays were asleep when Modeste opened her window, imagining that a man might pass by— the man of her dreams, the knight who would take her on a pillion, defying Dumay's pistols. In her dejection after her sister's death, Modeste had plunged into such constant reading as was enough to make her idiotic. Having been brought up to speak two languages, she was mistress of German as well as of French; then she and Caroline had learned English of Madame Dumay. Modeste, who, in such matters, found little supervision from her uncultivated companions, fed her soul on the masterpieces of modern English, German, and French literature—Lord Byron, Goethe, Schiller, Walter Scott, Hugo, Lamartine, Crabbe, Moore, the great works of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, history and the theatre, romance from Rabelais to Manon Lescaut, from Montaigne's *Essays* to Diderot, from the *Fabliaux* to *la Nouvelle Héloïse,* the thoughts of three countries furnished her brain with a medley of im-

ages. And her mind was beautiful in its cold guilelessness, its repressed virginal instincts, from which sprang forth, flashing, armed, sincere, and powerful, an intense admiration for genius. To Modeste, a new book was a great event; she was so happy over a great work as to alarm Madame Latournelle, as we have seen, and saddened when it failed to take her heart by storm.

But no gleam of this lurid flame ever appeared on the surface; it escaped the eye of Lieutenant Dumay and his wife as well as of the Latournelles; but the ear of the blind mother could not fail to hear its crackling. The deep contempt which Modeste thenceforth conceived for all ordinary men soon gave her countenance an indescribably proud and shy expression which qualified its German simplicity, but which agrees with one detail of her face; her hair, growing in a point in the middle of her forehead, seems to continue the slight furrow made by thought between her brows, and makes this shy look perhaps a little too wild.

This sweet girl's voice—before his departure Charles Mignon used to call her his little "Solomon's slipper," she was so clever—had acquired delightful flexibility of accent from her study of three languages. This advantage is yet further enhanced by a suave fresh quality which goes to the heart as well as to the ear. Though her mother could not see the hope of high destiny stamped on her daughter's brow, she could study the changes of her soul's development in the tones of that amorous voice.

After this period of ravenous reading, there came to Modeste a phase of the singular faculty possessed by a lively imagination; of living as an actor in an existence pictured as in a dream; of representing things wished for with a vividness so keen, that it verges on reality; of enjoying them in fancy, of devouring time even, seeing herself married, grown old, attending her own funeral, like Charles V.—in short, of playing out the drama of life, and at need that of death too.

As for Modeste, she played the drama of love. She imagined herself adored to the height of her wishes, and pass-

ing through every social phase. As the heroine of some dark romance, she loved either the executioner or some villain who died on the scaffold, or else, like her sister, some penniless fop, whose misdemeanors were the affair of the police court. She pictured herself as a courtesan, and laughed men to scorn in the midst of perpetual festivities, like Ninon. By turns, she led the life of an adventuress or of a popular actress, going through the vicissitudes of a Gil Blas, or the triumphs of Pasta, Malibran, Florine. Satiated with horrors, she would come back to real life. She married a notary, she ate the dry bread of respectability, she saw herself in Madame Latournelle. She accepted a laborious life, facing the worries of accumulating a fortune; then she began to romance again; she was loved for her beauty; the son of a peer of France, artistic and eccentric, read her heart, and discerned the star which the genius of a Staël had set on her brow. At last her father returned a millionaire. Justified by experience, she subjected her lovers to tests, preserving her own freedom; she owned a splendid château, servants, carriages, everything that luxury has most curious to bestow; and she mystified her lovers till she was forty, when she accepted an offer.

This edition of the *Arabian Nights,* of which there was but one copy, lasted nearly a year, and brought Modeste to satiety of invention. She too often held life in the hollow of her hand; she could say to herself very philosophically, and too seriously, too bitterly, too often, "Well; and then?" not to sink now to her waist in those depths of disgust, into which men of genius fall who are too eager to escape by the vast labor of the task to which they have devoted themselves. But for her rich nature and her youth, Modeste would have retired to a cloister. This satiety flung the girl, still soaked in Catholic feeling, into a love of goodness, and of the infinitude of heaven. She conceived of charity as the occupation of her life; still she groped in forlorn gloom as she found there no aliment for the fancy that gnawed at her heart like a malignant insect in the cup of a flower. She calmly stitched at baby clothes for poor women; and she listened absently to

Monsieur Latournelle grumbling at Monsieur Dumay for trumping a thirteenth, of forcing him to play his last trump. Faith led Modeste into a strange path. She fancied that by becoming irreproachable in the Catholic sense, she might achieve such a pitch of sanctity that God would hear her and grant her desires.

"Faith, as Jesus Christ says, can remove mountains; the Saviour made His apostle walk on the Lake of Tiberias; while I only ask of God to send me a husband," thought she. "That is much easier than going for a walk on the sea."

She fasted all through Lent, and did not commit the smallest sin; then she promised herself that on coming out of church on a certain day she would meet a handsome young man, worthy of her, whom her mother would approve, and who would follow her, madly in love. On the day she had fixed for God to send her this angel without fail, she was persistently followed by a horrible beggar; it poured with rain, and there was not one young man out of doors. She went down to the quay to see the English come on shore, but every Englishman had an English damsel almost as handsome as herself, and Modeste could not see anything like a Childe Harold who had lost his way. At that stage tears rose to her eyes as she sat, like Marius, on the ruins of her imaginings. One day when she made an appointment with God for the third time, she believed that the elect of her dreams had come into the church, and she dragged Madame Latournelle to look behind every pillar, imagining that he was hiding out of delicacy. Thenceforth she concluded that God had no power. She often made conversations with this imaginary lover, inventing question and answer, and giving him a very pretty wit.

Thus it was her heart's excessive ambition, buried in romance, which gave Modeste the discretion so much admired by the good people who watched over her; they might have brought her many a Francisque Althor or Vilquin *fils*, she would not have stooped to such boors. She required simply and purely a man of genius; talent she thought little of, as a barrister

is nothing to a girl who is set on an ambassador. She wished for riches only to cast them at her idol's feet. The golden background against which the figures of her dreams stood out was less precious than her heart overflowing with a woman's delicacy; for her ruling idea was to give wealth and happiness to a Tasso, a Milton, a Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a Murat, a Christopher Columbus. Vulgar sorrows appealed but little to this soul, which longed to extinguish the stake of such martyrs unrecognized during their lifetime. Modeste thirsted for unconfessed suffering, the great anguish of the mind.

Sometimes she imagined the balm, she elaborated the tenderness, the music, the thousand devices by which she would have soothed the fierce misanthropy of Jean-Jacques. Again she fancied herself the wife of Lord Byron, and almost entered into his scorn of realities, while making herself as fantastic as the poetry of Manfred, and into his doubts while making him a Catholic. Modeste accused all the women of the seventeenth century as guilty of Molière's melancholy.

"How is it," she wondered, "that some living, wealthy, and beautiful woman does not rush forth to meet every man of genius, to make herself his slave like Lara, the mysterious page?"

As you see, she had quite understood the English poet's wail, as sung by Gulnare. She greatly admired the conduct of the young English girl who came to propose to the younger Crébillon, who married her. The story of Sterne and Eliza Draper was a joy to her for some months; as the imaginary heroine of a similar romance, she studied the sublime part of Eliza again and again. The exquisite feeling so gracefully expressed in those letters filled her eyes with the tears which, it is said, never rose to those of the wittiest of English writers.

Modeste thus lived for some time by her sympathy, not merely with the works, but with the personal character of her favorite authors. Goldsmith, the author of *Obermann,* Charles Nodier, Maturin—the poorest, the most unhappy were her gods; she understood their sufferings, she entered into their squalor, blending with heaven-sent visions; she

poured on them the treasures of her heart; she pictured herself clearly as supplying the comforts of life to these artists, martyrs to their gifts. This noble compassion, this intuitive knowledge of the difficulties of work, this worship for talent, is one of the rarest vagaries that ever beat its wings in a woman's soul. At first it is like a secret between her and God, for there is nothing dazzling in it, nothing to flatter her vanity—that potent auxiliary of all actions in France.

From this third phase of her ideas there was born in Modeste a violent desire to study one of these anomalous lives to the very heart of it, to know the springs of thought, the secret sorrows of genius, and what it craves, and what it is. And so, in her, the rashness of phantasy, the wanderings of her soul in a void, her excursions into the darkness of the future, the impatience of her undeveloped love to centre in an object, the nobleness of her notions of life, her determination to suffer in some lofty sphere rather than to paddle in the slough of provincial life as her mother had done, the vow she had made to herself never to go wrong, to respect her parents' home and never bring to it anything but joy,—all this world of feeling at last took shape: Modeste purposed to be the wife of a poet, an artist, a man, in short, superior to the crowd; but she meant to choose him, and to subject him to a thorough study, before giving him her heart, her life, her immense tenderness freed from the trammels of passion.

She began by reveling in this pretty romance. Perfect tranquillity possessed her soul. Her countenance was gradually colored by it. She became the lovely and sublime image of Germany that you have seen, the glory of the Chalet, the pride of Madame Latournelle and the Dumays. Then Modeste lived a double life. She humbly and lovingly fulfilled all the trivial tasks of daily life at the Chalet, using them as a check to hold in the poem of her ideal existence, like the Carthusians, who order their material life by rule and occupy their time to allow the soul to develop itself in prayer.

All great intellects subject themselves to some mechanical employment to obtain control of thought. Spinoza ground

lenses, Bayle counted the tiles in a roof, Montesquieu worked in his garden. The body being thus under control, the spirit spreads its wings in perfect security. So Madame Mignon, who read her daughter's soul, was right. Modeste was in love; she loved with that Platonic sentiment which is so rare, so little understood—the first illusion of girlhood, the subtlest of feelings, the heart's daintiest morsel. She drank deep draughts from the cup of the unknown, the impossible, the visionary. She delighted in the Blue Bird of the Maiden's Paradise, which sings far away, on which none may lay hands, which lets itself be seen, while the shot of no gun can ever touch it; its magical colors, like the sparkling of gems, dazzle the eye, but it is never more seen when once reality appears—the hideous Harpy bringing witnesses and the *Maire* in her train. To have all the poetry of love without the presence of the lover! How exquisite an orgy! What a fair chimera of all colors and every plumage!

This was the trifling foolish accident which sealed the girl's fate.

Modeste saw on a bookseller's counter a lithographed portrait of de Canalis, one of her favorites. You know what libels these sketches are, the outcome of an odious kind of speculation which falls upon the persons of celebrated men, as if their face were public property. So Canalis, caught in a Byronic attitude, offered to public admiration his disordered hair, his bare throat, and the excessively high forehead proper to every bard. Victor Hugo's brow will lead to as many heads being shaved as there were sucking field-marshals who rushed to die on the strength of Napoleon's glory.

Modeste was struck by this head, made sublime by commercial requirements; and on the day when she bought the portrait, one of the finest books by Arthès had just come out. Though it may sound to her discredit, it must be confessed that she long hesitated between the illustrious poet and the illustrious prose writer. But were these two great men unmarried? Modeste began by securing the co-operation of

Françoise Cochet, the girl whom poor Bettina-Caroline had taken with her from le Havre and brought back again. She lived in the town, and Madame Mignon and Madame Dumay would employ her for a day's work in preference to any other. Modeste had this somewhat homely creature up into her room; she swore that she would never cause her parents the smallest grief, nor exceed the limits imposed on a young lady; she promised Françoise that in the future, on her father's return, the poor girl should have an easy life, on condition of her keeping absolute secrecy as to the service required of her. What was it?—A mere trifle, a perfectly innocent thing. All that Modeste asked of her accomplice was that she should post certain letters and fetch the replies, addressed to Françoise Cochet.

The bargain concluded, Modeste wrote a polite note to Dauriat, the publisher of Canalis' poems, in which she asked him, in the interests of the great poet, whether Canalis were married, begging him to address the answer to Mademoiselle Françoise, *post restante,* au Havre. Dauriat, who, of course, could not take such a letter seriously, sent a reply concocted in his private room by five or six journalists, each in turn adding his jest.

"MADEMOISELLE,—Canalis (Baron de), Constant-Cyr-Melchior, member of the French Academy, born in 1800 at Canalis, Corrèze; stands five feet four, is in good condition, vaccinated, thoroughbred, has served his term under the conscription, enjoys perfect health, has a small landed estate in Corrèze, and wishes to marry, but looks for great wealth.

"His arms are, party per pale gules a broad axe or, and sable a shell argent; surmounted by a baron's coronet; supporters, two larches proper. The motto *Or et fer* (gold and iron) has never proved auriferous.

"The first Canalis, who went to the Holy Land in the first crusade, is mentioned in the Chronicles of Auvergne as carrying no weapon but an axe, by reason of the complete indigence in which he lived, and which has ever since weighed on his

posterity. Hence, no doubt, the blazon. The axe brought him nothing but an empty shell. This noble baron became famous, having discomfited many infidels, and he died at Jerusalem, without either gold or iron, as bare as a worm, on the road to Ascalon, the ambulance service having not yet been called into existence.

"The castle of Canalis—the land yields a few chestnuts—consists of two dismantled towers joined by a wall, remarkable for its superior growth of ivy, and it pays twenty-two francs to the revenue.

"The publisher, undersigned, begs to remark that he pays Monsieur de Canalis ten thousand francs per volume for his poetry. He does not give his empty shells for nothing.

"The Bard of the Corrèze lives at Rue de Paradis-Poissonnière, No. 29, which is a suitable situation for a poet of the Seraphic School. Worms (*les vers*) are a bait for gudgeon. Letters must be prepaid.

"Certain noble dames of the Faubourg Saint-Germain often, it is said, make their way to Paradise and patronize the divinity. King Charles X. thinks so highly of this great poet as to believe him capable of becoming a statesman. He has recently made him an officer of the Legion of Honor, and, which is more to the purpose, Master of Appeals, attached to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. These functions in no way keep the great man from drawing a pension of three thousand francs from the fund devoted to the encouragement of art and letters. This pecuniary success causes, in the publishing world, an eighth plague which Egypt was spared—a plague of worms (*les vers*)!

"The last edition of the works of Canalis, printed on hand-made paper, large 8vo, with vignettes by Bixiou, Joseph Bridau, Schinner, Sommervieux, and others, printed by Didot, is in five volumes, price nine francs, post paid."

This letter fell like a paving-stone on a tulip. A poet as Master of Appeals, in the immediate circle of a Minister, drawing a pension, aiming at the red rosette, adored of the

ladies of the Faubourg Saint-Germain! Was this at all like the threadbare poet wandering on the quays, melancholy and dreamy, overwrought by work, and climbing up to his garret again loaded with poetic inspiration? At the same time, Modeste saw through the jest of the envious publisher, which conveyed, "I made Canalis! I made Nathan!" Then she re-read Canalis' verses, very catching verses, full of hypocrisy, and which require a few words of analysis if only to explain her infatuation.

Canalis is distinguished from Lamartine, the chief of the Seraphic School, by a sort of sick-nurse blarney, a perfidious sweetness, and exquisite correctness. If the chief, with his sublime outcry, may be called an eagle, Canalis, all rose and white, is a flamingo. In him women discern the friend they yearn for, a discreet confidant, their interpreter, the being who understands them, and who explains them to themselves.

The broad margins with which Dauriat had graced his last edition were covered with confessions scribbled in pencil by Modeste, who sympathized with this dreamy and tender soul. Canalis has not life in his gift; he does not breathe it into his creations; but he knows how to soothe vague sufferings such as Modeste was a victim to. He speaks to girls in their own language, lulling the pain of the most recent wounds, and silencing groans, and even sobs. His talent does not consist in preaching loftily to the sufferer, in giving her the medicine of strong emotions; he is content to say in a musical voice which commands belief: "I am unhappy, as you are; I understand you fully; come with me, we will weep together on the bank of this stream, under the willows!" And they go! and listen to his verse, as vacuous and as sonorous as the song of a nurse putting a baby to sleep! Canalis—like Nodier in this—bewitches you by an artlessness, which in the prose writer is natural but in the poet elaborately studied, by his archness, his smile, his fallen flowers, his childlike philosophy. He mimics the language of early days well enough to carry you back to the fair field of illusion.

To an eagle we are pitiless; we insist on the quality of the diamond, flawless perfection; but from Canalis we are satisfied with the orphan's mite; everything may be forgiven him. He seems such a good fellow, human above everything. These seraphic airs succeed with him, as those of a woman will always succeed if she acts simplicity well—the startled, youthful, martyred, suffering angel.

Modeste, summing up her impressions, felt that she trusted that soul, that countenance, as attractive as Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's. She paid no heed to the publisher. And so, at the beginning of the month of August, she wrote the following letter to this Dorat of the sacristy, who even now is regarded as one of the stars of the modern Pleiades.

I.

To Monsieur de Canalis.

"Many times ere now, monsieur, I have intended to write to you—and why? You can guess: to tell you how much I delight in your talent. Yes, I feel a longing to express to you the admiration of a poor country-bred girl, very solitary in her nook, whose sole joy is in reading your poetry. From *René* I came to you. Melancholy tends to reverie. How many other women must have paid you the homage of their secret thoughts! What chance have I of being of the elect in such a crowd? What interest can this paper have, though full of my soul, above all the perfumed letters which beset you? I introduce myself with more to perplex you than any other woman. I intend to remain unknown, and yet ask your entire confidence, as if you had known me a long time.

"Answer me, be kind to me. I do not pledge myself to tell my name some day, still I do not positively say no. . . . What more can I add to this letter? Regard it, monsieur, as a great effort, and allow me to offer you my hand—oh, a very friendly hand—that of your servant,

"O. D'ESTE-M.

"If you do me the favor of replying, address your letter, I beg, to Mademoiselle F. Cochet, Poste Restante, le Havre."

Now every damsel, whether romantic or no, can imagine Modeste's impatience during the next few days! The air was full of tongues of flame; the trees looked like plumage; she did not feel her body; she floated above nature! The earth vanished under her tread. Wondering at the powers of the post office, she followed her little sheet of paper through space; she was glad, as we are glad at twenty at the first exercise of our will. She was bewitched, possessed, as people were in the Middle Ages. She pictured to herself the poet's lodgings, his room; she saw him opening the letter, and she made a million guesses.

Having sketched his poetry, it is necessary here to give an outline of the man. Canalis is small and thin, with an aristocratic figure; dark, gifted with a foolish face and a rather insignificant head, that of a man who has more vanity than pride. He loves luxury, display, and splendor. Fortune is a necessity to him more than to other men. No less proud of his birth than of his talent, he has swamped his ancestors by too great personal pretensions. After all, the Canalis are neither Navarreins, nor Cadignans, nor Grandlieus, nor Nègrepelisses; however, nature has done much to support his pretensions. He has the eyes of Oriental lustre that we look for in a poet, a very pretty refinement of manner, a thrilling voice; but a mannerism that is natural to him almost nullifies these advantages. He is an actor in perfect good faith. He displays a very elegant foot—it is an acquired habit. He has a declamatory style of talk, but it is his own. His affectation is theatrical, but it has become a second nature. These faults, as we must call them, are in harmony with an unfailing generosity which may be termed carpet-knightliness in contrast to chivalry. Canalis has not faith enough to be a Don Quixote, but he is too high-minded not to take invariably the nobler side in any question. His poetry, which comes out in a military eruption on every possible occasion,

is a great disadvantage to the poet, who is not indeed lacking in wit, but whose talent hinders his wit from developing. He is the slave of his reputation; he aims at seeming superior to it.

Hence, as frequently happens, the man is completely out of tune with the products of his mind. The author of these insinuating, artless poems, full of tender sentiment, of these calm verses as clear as lake ice, of this caressing womanish poetry, is an ambitious little man, buttoned tightly into his coat, with the air of a diplomate, dreaming of political influence, stinking of the aristocrat, scented and conceited, thirsting for a fortune that he may have an income equal to his ambitions, and already spoiled by success under two aspects—the crown of bays and the crown of myrtle. A salary of eight thousand francs, a pension of three thousand, two thousand from the Académie, a thousand crowns of inherited income—a good deal reduced by the agricultural requirements of the Canalis estate, and the ten thousand francs he gets from his poems one year with another—twenty-five thousand francs a year in all.

To Modeste's hero this income was all the more precarious because he spent, on an average, five or six thousand francs a year more than he received, but hitherto the King's privy purse and the secret funds of the Ministry had made up the deficit. He had composed a hymn for the coronation, for which he had been rewarded with a service of plate; he refused a sum of money, saying that the Canalis owed their homage to the King of France. The *Roi Chevalier* smiled, and ordered from Odiot a costly version of the lines from *Zaïre*.

> **What! Rhymester, did you ever hope to vie**
> **With Charles the Tenth in generosity?**

Canalis had drained himself dry, to use a picturesque vulgarism; he knew that he was incapable of inventing a fresh form of poetry; his lyre has not seven strings, it has but one;

and so long had he played on it, that the public left him now no choice but to use it to hang himself, or to be silent. De Marsay, who could not endure Canalis, had uttered a sarcasm of which the poisoned dart had pierced the poet's conceit to the quick.

"Canalis," he had said, "strikes me as being just like the man of whom Frederic the Great spoke after a battle, as the trumpeter who had never ceased blowing the same note through his penny pipe!"

Canalis was anxious to become a political personage, and as a beginning made capital of a journey he had taken to Madrid when the Duc de Chaulieu was ambassador, accompanying him as *attaché*—but to the Duchess, as the jest went in fashionable drawing-rooms. How often has a jest sealed a man's fate! Colla, the erewhile President of the Cisalpine Republic, and the greatest advocate in Piémont, is told by a friend, at the age of forty, that he knows nothing of botany; he is nettled, he becomes a Jussieu, cultivates flowers, invents new ones, and publishes, in Latin, the *Flora of Piémont,* the work of ten years!

"Well, after all, Canning and Chateaubriand were statesmen," said the extinguished poet, "and in me de Marsay shall find his master!"

Canalis would have liked to write an important political work; but he was afraid of getting into trouble with French prose, a cruelly exacting medium to those who have acquired the habit of taking four Alexandrine lines to express one idea. Of all the poets of the day, only three—Victor Hugo, Théophile Gautier, and de Vigny—have been able to conquer the double glory of a poet and a prose-writer, which was also achieved by Voltaire, Molière, and Rabelais. It is one of the rarest triumphs in French literature, and distinguishes a poet far above his fellows. Our poet of the Faubourg Saint-Germain was therefore very wise to try to find shelter for his chariot under the guardian roof of a Government office.

When he was made Master of Appeals, he felt the need of a secretary, a friend who might fill his place on many oc-

casions, cook his affairs with publishers, see to his fame in the newspapers, and, at a pinch, support him in politics—in short, would be his satellite. Several men, famous in art, science, or letters, have one or two such followers in Paris, a captain in the Guards, or a Court Chamberlain, who live in the beams of their sunshine, a sort of aides-de-camp intrusted with delicate tasks, allowing themselves to be compromised at need, working round the idol's pedestal, not quite his equals and not quite his superiors, men bold in puffery, the first in every breach, covering his retreats, looking after his business, and devoted to him so long as their illusions last, or till their claims are satisfied. Some at last perceive that their Great Man is ungrateful; others feel that they are being made use of; many weary of the work; and few indeed are satisfied by the mild interchange of sentiment, the only reward to be looked for from an intimacy with a superior man, and which satisfied Ali, raised by Mahomet to his own level. Many, deluded by their self-conceit, think themselves as clever as their Great Man. Devotion is rare, especially without reward and without hope, as Modeste conceived of it.

Nevertheless, a Menneval is occasionally to be met with; and, in Paris more than anywhere, men love to live in the shade and to work in silence, Benedictines who have lost their way in a world which has no monastery for them. These valiant lambs bear in their deeds and in their private lives the poetry which writers put into words. They are poets at heart, in their secluded meditations, in their tenderness, as others are poets on paper, in the fields of intellect, and at so much a verse, like Lord Byron—like all those who live, alas! by ink, which in these days is the water of Hippocrene, for which the Government is to blame.

It was a young consulting referendary of the Court of Exchequer who constituted himself the poet's secretary; he was attracted by the poet's fame, and the future prospects of this vaunted political genius, and led by the advice of Madame d'Espard, who thus played the Duchesse de Chaulieu's cards for her; and Canalis made much of him, as a speculator

does of his first shareholder. The beginnings of this alliance had quite an air of friendship. The younger man had already gone through a course of the same kind with one of the Ministers who fell in 1827; but the Minister had taken care to find him a place in the Exchequer.

Ernest de la Brière, at that time seven-and-twenty, decorated with the Legion of Honor, with nothing in the world but the emoluments of his office, had the habit of business, and after hanging about the private room of the Prime Minister for four years, he knew a good deal. He was gentle, amiable, with an almost maidenly soul, full of good feeling, and he hated to be seen in the foreground. He loved his country, he yearned to be of use, but brilliancy dazzled him. If he had had his choice, the place of secretary to a Napoleon would have been more to his mind than that of Prime Minister.

Ernest, having become the friend of Canalis, did great things for him, but in eighteen months he became aware of the shallowness of a nature which was poetical merely in its literary expression. The truth of the homely proverb, "The cowl does not make the monk," is especially applicable in literature. It is most rare to find a talent and character in harmony. A man's faculties are not the sum-total of the man. This discord, of which the manifestations are startling, is the outcome of an unexplored—a perhaps unexplorable—mystery. The brain and its products of every kind—since in the arts the hand of man carries out his brain—form a world apart that flourishes under the skull, perfectly independent of the feelings, of what are called the virtues of a citizen, of the head of a family, of a private householder. And yet this is not final; nothing in man is final. It is certain that a debauchee will exhaust his talents in orgies, and a drunkard drown it in his libations, while a good man can never acquire talent by wholesome decency; but it is also almost proved that Virgil, the poet of love, never loved a Dido; and that Rousseau, the pattern citizen, had pride enough to furnish forth a whole aristocracy. Nevertheless, Michael Angelo and Raphael showed the happy concord of talent and

character. Hence talent is in men, as far as the individual is concerned, what beauty is in women—a promise. Let us give twofold admiration to the man whose heart and character are equally perfect with his talent.

Ernest, when he detected under the poet an ambitious egoist—the worst species of egoist, for some are amiable—felt a singular diffidence about leaving him. Honest souls do not easily break their bonds, especially those they have voluntarily accepted. The secretary, then, was on very good terms with the poet when Modeste's letter was flying through the mail, but on the good terms of constant self-effacement. La Brière felt he owed Canalis something for the frankness with which he had revealed himself. And indeed, in this man, who will be accounted great so long as he lives, and made much of, like Marmontel, his defects are the seamy side of brilliant qualities. But for his vanity, his pretentious conceit, he might not have been gifted with that sonorous verbiage which is a necessary instrument in the political life of the day. His shallowness is part of his rectitude and loyalty; his ostentation is paired with liberality. Society profits by the results; the motives may be left to God.

Still, when Modeste's letter arrived, Ernest had no illusions left as to Canalis. The two friends had just breakfasted, and were chatting in the poet's study; he was at that time living in ground-floor rooms looking out on a garden, beyond a courtyard.

"Ah!" cried Canalis, "I was saying the other day to Madame de Chaulieu that I must cast forth some new poem; admiration is running low, for it is some time since I have had any anonymous letters——"

"An unknown lady?"

"Unknown! A d'Este, and from le Havre! It is evidently an assumed name!"

And Canalis handed the letter to la Brière. This poem, this veiled enthusiasm, in short, Modeste's very heart, was recklessly exposed by the gesture of a coxcomb.

"It is a grand thing," said the young accountant, "thus to

attract the chastest feelings, to compel a helpless woman to shake off the habits forced upon her by education, by nature, by society, to break through conventionalities. . . . What privileges genius commands! A letter like this in my hand, written by a girl, a genuine girl, without reservation, with enthusiasm . . ."

"Well?" said Canalis.

"Well, if you had suffered as much as Tasso, you ought to find it reward enough!" exclaimed la Brière.

"So we tell ourselves at the first or at the second letter," said Canalis. "But at the thirtieth! . . . but when we have discovered that the young enthusiast is an old hand! . . . but when at the end of the radiant path traveled over by the poet's imagination we have seen some English old maid sitting on a milestone and holding out her hand! . . . but when the angel—by post—turns into a poor creature, moderately good-looking, in search of a husband! . . . Well, then, the effervescence subsides."

"I am beginning to think," said la Brière, smiling, "that glory has something poisonous in it, like certain gorgeous flowers."

"Besides, my dear fellow," Canalis went on, "all these women, even when they are sincere, have an ideal to which we rarely correspond. They never tell themselves that a poet is a man, and a tolerably vain one, as I am accused of being; it never occurs to them that he is rough-ridden by a sort of feverish excitement which makes him disagreeable and uncertain. They want him to be always great, always splendid; they never dream that talent is a disease; that Nathan lives on Florine; that d'Arthez is too fat; that Joseph Bridau is too thin; that Béranger can go on foot; that the divinity may foam at the mouth. A Lucien de Rubempré, a verse-writer, and a pretty fellow, is a Phenix. So why go out of your way to receive bad compliments and sit under the cold shower-bath of a disillusioned woman's helpless stare?"

"Then the true poet," said la Brière, "ought to remain hidden, like God, in the centre of his universe, and be visible only in his creations!"

"Then glory would be too dearly paid for," replied Canalis. "There is some good in life, I tell you," said he, taking a cup of tea. "When a woman of birth and beauty loves a poet, she does not hide herself in the gallery or the stage-box of a theatre, like a duchess smitten by an actor; she feels strong enough and sufficiently protected by her beauty, by her fortune, by her name, to say, as in every epic poem, 'I am the nymph Calypso, and I love Telemachus." Mystification is the resource of small minds. For some time now I have never answered such masqueraders——"

"Oh! how I could love a woman who had come to me!" cried la Brière, restraining a tear. "It may be said in reply, my dear Canalis, that it is never a poor creature that rises to the level of a celebrated man; she is too suspicious, too vain, too much afraid. It is always a star, a——"

"A Princess," said Canalis, with a shout of laughter, "who condescends to him, I suppose?—My dear fellow, such a thing happens once in a century. Such a passion is like the plant that flowers once in a hundred years.—Princesses who are young, rich, and handsome have too much else to do; they are enclosed, like all rare plants, within a hedge of silly men, well born and well bred, and as empty as an elder-stem. My dream, alas! the crystal of my dream hung with garlands of flowers all the way hither from la Corrèze, and with what fervor!—But no more of that!—it is in fragments, at my feet, long since.—No, no, every anonymous letter is a beggar! And what demands they make. Write to this young person, assuming her to be young and pretty, and you will see! You will have your hands full. One cannot in reason love every woman. Apollo, or at any rate, the Apollo Belvedere, is a consumptive dandy who must save his strength."

"But when a woman comes to you like this," argued Ernest, "her excuse must lie in her certainty that she can eclipse the most adored mistress in tenderness, in beauty—and then a little curiosity——"

"Ah!" said Canalis, "my too youthful Ernest, you must allow me to be faithful to the fair Duchess, who is all my joy!"

"You are right—too right," replied Ernest.

Nevertheless, the young secretary read and re-read Modeste's letter, trying to guess the mind behind it.

"But there is nothing extravagant in it, no appeal to your genius, only to your heart," he said to Canalis. "This perfume of modesty and the exchange proposed would tempt me——"

"Sign it yourself; answer her, and follow up the adventure to the end; it is a poor bargain that I offer you," exclaimed Canalis, with a smile. "Go on; you will have something to tell me in three months' time, if it lasts three months . . ."

Four days after Modeste received the following letter, written on handsome paper, under a double cover, and sealed with the arms of Canalis.

II.

To Mademoiselle O. d'Este-M.

"MADEMOISELLE,—Admiration for great works—admitting that mine may be great—implies a certain holy simplicity which is a defence against irony and a justification, in the eyes of every tribunal, of the step you have taken in writing to me. Above all, I must thank you for the pleasure which such a testimonial never fails to give, even when undeserved, for the writer of verse and the poet alike secretly believe themselves worthy of them, self-love is a form of matter so far from repellent of praise. The best proof of friendship that I can give to an unknown lady in return for this balm, which heals the stings of criticism, is surely to share with her the harvest of my experience, at the risk of scaring away her living illusions.

"Mademoiselle, the noblest palm a young girl can bear is that of a saintly, pure, and blameless life. Are you alone in

the world? That is a sufficient answer. But if you have a family, a father or a mother, consider all the sorrows that a letter like yours may entail—written to a poet whom you do not know. Not every writer is an angel; they have their faults. Some are fickle, reckless, conceited, ambitious, dissipated; and imposing as innocence must be, chivalrous as a French poet may be, you might find more than one degenerate bard willing to encourage your affection only to betray it. Then your letter would not be interpreted as I read it. He would find a meaning in it which you have not put there, and which in your innocence you do not even suspect. Many authors, many natures!

"I am extremely flattered by your having thought me worthy to understand you; but if you had addressed yourself to an insincere talent, to a cynic whose writings were melancholy while his life was a continual carnival, you might have found at the end of your sublime imprudence some bad man, a dangler behind the scenes, or wine-shop hero! You, under the arbor of clematis where you dream over poetry, cannot smell the stale cigar smoke which depoetizes the manuscript; just as when you go to a ball, dressed in the dazzling products of the jeweler's skill, you never think of the sinewy arms, the toilers in their shirt-sleeves, the wretched workshops whence spring these radiant flowers of handicraft.

"Go further. What is there in the solitary life of reverie that you lead—by the seashore, no doubt—to interest a poet whose task it is to divine everything, since he must describe everything? Our young girls here are so highly accomplished, that no daughter of Eve can vie with them! What reality was ever so good as a dream? And you now, you, a young girl brought up to be the duteous mother of a family, what would you gain by an initiation into the terrible excitement of a poet's life in this appalling capital, to be defined only as a hell we love.

"If you took up your pen, prompted by the wish to enliven your monotonous existence as an inquisitive girl, has not this a semblance of depravity? What meaning am I to attribute

to your letter? Are you one of a caste of reprobates, seeking a friend at a distance? Are you cursed with ugliness, and do you feel you have a noble soul with none to trust? Alas!—a sad conclusion—you have either gone too far, or not far enough. Either let it end here, or, if you persist, tell me more than in the letter you have already written.

"But, mademoiselle, if you are young, if you have a family, if you feel that you bear in your heart a heavenly spikenard, to be shed, as the Magdalen shed hers on Christ's feet, suffer yourself to be appreciated by some man who is worthy of you, and become what every good girl should be—an admirable wife, the virtuous mother of children. A poet is the poorest conquest any young woman can aspire to; he has too much vanity, too many salient angles which must run counter to the legitimate vanity of a wife, and bruise the tenderness which has no experience of life. The poet's wife should love him for long before marrying him; she must resign herself to be as charitable and as indulgent as the angels, to all the virtues of motherhood. These qualities, mademoiselle, exist only as a germ in a young girl.

"Listen to the whole truth; do I not owe it you in return for your intoxicating flattery? Though it may be glorious to marry a great celebrity, a woman soon discovers that a man, however superior, is but a man like all others. He then the less fulfils her hopes, because miracles are expected of him. A famous poet is then in the predicament of a woman whose overpraised beauty makes us say, 'I had pictured her as handsomer'; she does not answer to the requirements of the portrait sketched by the same fairy to whom I owe your letter—Imagination!

"Again, great qualities of mind develop and flourish only in an invisible sphere; the poet's wife sees only the unpleasant side of it; she sees the jewels made instead of wearing them. If the brilliancy of an exceptional position is what fascinates you, I warn you, its pleasures are soon exhausted. You would be provoked to find so much that is rough in a situation which from afar looks so smooth, so much ice on

a glittering height! And then, as women never have set foot in the world of difficulty, they presently cease to value what they once admired, when they fancy that they have understood the workmanship at a glance.

"I will conclude with a last reflection, which you will do wrong to mis-read as an entreaty in disguise; it is the advice of a friend. A communion of souls cannot be complete excepting between two persons who are prepared to conceal nothing. Could you show yourself as you really are to a stranger? I pause before the consequences of such a notion.

"Accept, mademoiselle, all the respect we owe to every woman, even to those who are unknown, and who wear a mask."

To think that she had carried this letter between her skin and her stays, under the scorching busk, for a whole day! . . . that she had postponed reading it till an hour when everybody was asleep, till midnight, after waiting for the solemn hour in the pangs of a fiery imagination! . . . that she had blessed the poet, had read in fancy a thousand letters, had conceived of everything excepting this drop of cold water shed on the most diaphanous visions of fancy, and destroying them as prussic acid destroys life! . . . It was enough to make her hide her face—as Modeste did—under her sheets though she was alone, and put out the candle, and weep.

All this happened in the early days of July. Modeste presently got up, paced her room, and then opened the window. She wanted air. The scent of flowers came up to her with the peculiar freshness of night-perfumes. The sea, lighted up by the moon, twinkled like a mirror. A nightingale was singing in the Vilquins' park.

"Ah! there is the poet!" said Modeste to herself, her anger dying out.

The bitterest reflections crowded on her mind. She was stung to the quick; she wanted to read the letter again. She

relighted the candle, and studied this careful production, till at last she heard the early voices of real life.

"He is in the right, and I am in the wrong," thought she. "But how could I expect to find one of Molière's old men under the star-spangled robe of a poet?"

When a woman or a girl is caught red-handed, she feels intense hatred of the witness, the first cause, or the object of her folly. And so Modeste, genuine, natural, and coy, felt her heart swell with a dreadful longing to trample on this essence of rectitude, and throw him over into some abyss of contradiction, to pay him back this stunning blow.

The pure-hearted child, whose head alone had been corrupted by her reading, by her sister's long agony, and by the perilous meditations of her solitude, was roused by a sunbeam falling on her face. She had lain for three hours tacking about on the immense ocean of doubt. Such nights are never forgotten.

Modeste went at once to her little lacquer table, her father's gift, and wrote a letter dictated by the infernal spirit of revenge which disports itself at the bottom of a young girl's heart.

III.

To Monsieur de Canalis.

"MONSIEUR,—You are certainly a great poet, but you are something better—an honest man. After showing so much frank loyalty to a young girl on the verge of an abyss, have you enough to reply without the least hypocrisy or evasion to this question:

"Would you have written the letter I have received in answer to mine—would your ideas, your language, have been the same if some one had whispered in your ear, what may be true: 'Mademoiselle O. d'Este-M. has six millions of francs, and does not want to have a simpleton for her master'?

"For one moment admit this hypothesis for a fact. Be as honest with me as with yourself; fear nothing. I am superior to my twenty years, nothing that is genuine can injure you in my estimation. When I shall have read that confession, if indeed you vouchsafe to make it to me, you shall have an answer to your first letter.

"After admiring your talent, which is often sublime, allow me to do homage to your delicacy and rectitude, which compel me to sign myself

"Your humble servant,
"O. D'ESTE-M."

When this note was placed in la Brière's hands, he went out to walk on the Boulevards, tossed in his soul like a light bark in a tempest when the wind blows every minute from a different point of the compass. One of the young men of whom we meet so many—a true Parisian, would have summed up the case in these words, "An old hand!" But to a young fellow whose soul is lofty and refined, this sort of implied oath, this appeal to veracity, had the power to arouse the three judges that lurk at the bottom of every conscience. And Honor, Truth, and Justice, rising erect, cried aloud.

"Ah! my dear Ernest," said Truth, "you certainly would not have written a lecture to a rich heiress. No, no, my boy, you would have set off, nose on for le Havre, to find out whether the young lady were handsome, and you would have been much aggrieved by the preference given to genius. And if you could only have tripped your friend up, and have made yourself acceptable in his place, Mademoiselle d'Este would have been divine!"—"What," said Justice, "you pity yourselves, you men of brains or wit, and without cash, when you see rich girls married to men whom you would not employ as porters; you run amuck against the sordidness of the age, which is eager to wed money with money, and never to unite some young fellow full of talent to a rich and highborn beauty; now here is one who rebels against the spirit of the time, and the poet retorts with a blow on her heart!"—"Rich

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [

girl of the middle class, for the child of a rich commercial house, for the heiress of a noble family, for a daughter of the race of Este. A king must not stoop to pick up a gold coin, and a workman must turn back to look for a piece of ten sous he has dropped, though both alike ought to observe the laws of economy. A d'Este owning six millions of francs may wear a broad-brimmed hat and feathers, flourish a riding whip, mount an Arab horse, and come as an Amazon in gold lace, followed by a groom, to say to a poet, 'I love poetry, and desire to expiate the wrongs done by Leonora to Tasso,' while the daughter of a merchant would be simply ridiculous in imitating her.

"To what social class do you belong? Answer truly, and I will as truly reply to the question you ask me.

"Not being so happy as to know you, though already bound to you by a sort of poetical communication, I do not like to offer you any vulgar homage. It is already a triumph of mischief for you perhaps to have perplexed a man whose books are published."

The young accountant was not lacking in skill of fence which a man of honor may allow himself. By return of post he received this reply:

V.

To Monsieur de Canalis.

"You are more and more cautious, my dear poet. My father is a count. The most distinguished member of our family was a cardinal, in the days when cardinals were the equals of kings. At the present day our race, almost extinct, ends in me; but I have the necessary quarterings to admit me to any Court or any Chapter. In short, we are a match for the Canalis. Excuse my not forwarding our coat-of-arms.

"Try to write as sincerely as I do. I await your reply to know whether I may still subscribe myself, as now,

"Your servant,

"O. D'ESTE-M."

"What advantage the young person takes of her position!" exclaimed la Brière. "But is she truthful?"

It is not for nothing that a man has been for four years a Minister's private secretary; that he has lived in Paris and watched its intrigues; and the purest soul is always more or less intoxicated by the heady atmosphere of the Empress city. La Brière, rejoicing that he was not Canalis, secured a place in the mail-coach for le Havre, after writing a letter in which he promised a reply by a certain day, excusing the delay by the importance of the confession required of him, and the business of his office. He took the precaution of obtaining from the Director-General of the Mails a line enjoining silence and compliance on the head of the office at le Havre. He could thus wait to see Françoise Cochet arrive at the office, and quietly follow her home. Guided by her, he mounted the hill of Ingouville, and saw Modeste Mignon at the window of the Chalet.

"Well, Françoise?" asked the girl.

"Yes, mademoiselle, I have got one."

Ernest, struck by this celestially fair type of beauty, turned on his heel, and inquired of a passer-by the name of the owner of that splendid residence.

"That?" asked the native, pointing to the great house.

"Yes, my good fellow."

"Oh, that belongs to Monsieur Vilquin, the richest ship-owner of the place, a man who does not know how much he has."

"I know of no Cardinal Vilquin in history," said the accountant to himself, as he went down the town again, to return to Paris.

Of course, he questioned the postmaster as to the Vilquin family. He learned that the Vilquins owned an immense

fortune; that Monsieur Vilquin had a son and two daughters, one of them married to young Monsieur Althor. Prudence saved la Brière from showing any adverse interest in the Vilquins; the postmaster was already looking at him with suspicion.

"Is there no one at the house just now besides the family?" he asked.

"Just at present the Hérouville family are there. There is some talk of a marriage between the young Duke and the second Mademoiselle Vilquin."

"There was a famous Cardinal d'Hérouville," thought la Brière, "in the time of the Valois; and, under Henri IV., the terrible Marshal, who was created Duke."

Ernest returned, having seen enough of Modeste to dream of her; to believe that, rich or poor, if she had a noble soul, he would gladly make her Madame la Brière, and he determined to carry on the correspondence.

Do your utmost, hapless Frenchwoman, to remain unknown, to weave the very least little romance in the midst of a civilization which takes note on public squares of the hour when every hackney cab comes and goes, which counts every letter and stamps them twice at the exact hours when they are posted and when they are delivered, which numbers the houses, which registers each floor on the schedule of taxes, after making a list of the windows and doors, which ere long will have every acre of land, down to the smallest holdings and its most trifling details, laid down on the broad sheets of a survey—a giant's task, by command of a giant! Try, rash maidens, to evade—not, indeed, the eye of the police, but the ceaseless gossip which, in the poorest hamlet, scrutinizes your most trivial acts, counts the dishes at the Préfet's dessert, and sees the melon rind outside the door of the small annuitant, which tries to hear the chink of gold when Economy adds it to her treasury, and every evening, over the fire, sums up the incomes of the village, of the town, of the department.

Modeste, by a commonplace mistake, had escaped the most innocent espionage, for which Ernest already blamed himself. But what Parisian could endure to be the dupe of a little country girl? Never be duped! This odious maxim is a solvent for all man's noble sentiments. From the letter he wrote, where every lash of the scourge of conscience has left its mark, the reader may easily imagine the conflict of feelings to which the honest youth was a prey.

A few days later, Modeste, sitting at her window on a fine summer day, read the following pages:

VI.

To Mademoiselle O. d'Este-M.

"Mademoiselle,—Without hypocrisy, yes, if I had been sure that you had an immense fortune, I should have acted quite differently. Why? I have sought the reason, and it is this. There is in us an inborn feeling, developed, too, to an extreme by society, which urges us to seek and to seize happiness. Most men confound happiness with the means to happiness, and in their eyes fortune is its chief element. I should therefore have endeavored to please you, spurred by the social instinct that has in all ages made wealth a religion. At least, I think so. The wisdom which substitutes good sense for impulse is not to be looked for in a man who is still young; and when the prey is in sight, the animal instinct lurking in the heart of man urges him on. Thus, instead of a lecture, I should have sent you compliments and flattery.

"Should I have respected myself? I doubt it. Mademoiselle, in such a case, success brings absolution; but as to happiness, that is another matter. Should I not distrust my wife if I won her thus? Most certainly. Your action would, sooner or later, have resumed its true character; your husband, however great you might deem him, would at last

have reproached you for having humiliated him; and you, sooner or later, might have learned to despise him. An ordinary man cuts the Gordian knot of a marriage for money with the sword of tyranny. A strong man forgives. The poet bewails himself. This, mademoiselle, is the answer given by my honesty.

"Now, attend to me well. Yours is the triumph of having made me reflect deeply, both on you, whom I know not enough, and on myself, whom I know but little. You have had the skill to stir up the evil thoughts that grovel at the bottom of every heart; but in me the outcome has been a generous something, and I hail you with my most grateful blessings, as, at sea, we hail a lighthouse warning us of rocks where we might have been wrecked.

"And now for my confession, for I would not lose your esteem nor my own for the price of all the treasures on earth. I was bent on knowing who you were. I have just come back from le Havre, where I saw Françoise Cochet, followed her to Ingouville, and saw you in your magnificent villa. You are as lovely as a poet's dream of woman; but I know not whether you are Mademoiselle Vilquin hidden under Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, or Mademoiselle d'Hérouville hidden under Mademoiselle Vilquin. Though all is fair in war, I blushed at playing the spy, and I paused in my investigations. You piqued my curiosity; owe me no grudge for having been so womanly, is it not a poet's privilege? Now I have opened my heart to you; I have let you read it; you may believe in the sincerity of what I am about to add. Brief as was the glimpse I had of you, it was enough to modify my opinion. You are a poet and a poem even before being a woman. Yes, there is in you something more precious than beauty; you are the ideal of art, of fancy.

"The step you took, blamable in a young girl fated to a commonplace existence, is different in one gifted with such a character as I suppose you to have. Among the vast number of beings flung by chance into social life to make up a generation, there are exceptions. If your letter is the outcome of

long poetical musing on the lot which the law reserves for women; if, carried away by the vocation of a superior and cultivated mind, you have wished to know something of the intimate life of a man to whom you concede the chance endowment of genius, in order to create a friendship with a soul akin to your own, exempt from vulgar conditions, and evading all the limitations of your sex—you are indeed an exception! The law which is good to measure the actions of the crowd is then very narrow to qualify your determination. But then the words of my first letter recur in all their meaning, 'You have done too much or not enough.'

"Once more accept my thanks for the service you have done me in compelling me to probe my heart; for you have cured me of the error, common enough in France, of regarding marriage as a means to fortune. In the midst of the disturbance of my conscience a sacred voice has spoken. I have solemnly sworn to myself to make my own fortune, that my choice of a wife may never be determined by mercenary motives. Finally, I have blamed and repressed the unbecoming curiosity you aroused in me. You have not six millions. It would be impossible at le Havre that a young lady possessed of such a fortune should remain unknown, and you would have been betrayed by the pack of those aristocratic families which I see in pursuit of heiresses here in Paris, and which has sent the King's chief equerry on a visit to your Vilquins. So the sentiments I express are put forward as a positive rule, apart from all romance or statement of fact.

"Now, prove to me that you have one of those souls which we allow to disobey the common law, and you will grant in your mind that this second letter is in the right as well as the first. You are destined to a middle-class life; obey the iron law that holds society together. You are a superior woman, and I admire you; but if you are bent on yielding to the instinct you ought to repress, I pity you; these are the conditions of the social state. The admirable moral of the domestic epic *Clarissa Harlowe* is that the victim's love, though legitimate and sincere, leads to her ruin, because it has

its rise and progress in defiance of her family. The family, silly and cruel as it is, is in its rights as against Lovelace. The family is society.

"Believe me, for a girl, as for a wife, her glory will always consist in restraining her ardent whims within the strictest limits of propriety. If I had a daughter who might become a Madame de Staël, I would wish that she might die at fifteen. Can you think, without the acutest regret, of your own child exhibited on the stage of celebrity and parading to win the applause of the mob? However high a woman may have raised herself in the secret poetry of her dreams, she must sacrifice her superiority on the altar of family life. Her soaring moods, her genius, her aspirations towards the lofty and the sublime, all the poem of a girl's soul belongs to the man she accepts, the children she may bear. I discern in you a secret ambition to enlarge the narrow circle of life to which every woman is condemned, and to bring passion and love into your marriage. Ah! it is a beautiful dream; it is not impossible; it is difficult; but it has been realized to bring incompatible souls—forgive me a word which has become ridiculous—to desperation.

"If you look for a sort of Platonic regard, it can only lead you to despair in the future. If your letter was a sport, play no more. And so this little romance ends, does it not? It will not have been altogether barren of fruit; my honesty has taken up arms; and you, on your part, have learned something certain about social life. Turn your gaze on real life, and throw the transient enthusiasm to which literature has given birth into the virtues of your sex. Farewell, mademoiselle; do me the honor of granting me your esteem. Since seeing you—or her whom I believe to be you—your letter has seemed to me quite natural; so fair a flower would instinctively turn towards the sun of poetry. So love poetry still, as you doubtless love flowers and music, the sumptuous grandeur of the sea, the beauties of Nature—all as ornaments of the soul; but remember all I have had the honor of telling you about poets. Be sure you do not marry an ass; seek with care for

the mate God has created for you. There are, take my word for it, many clever men capable of appreciating you and of making you happy. If I were rich, and you were poor, I would some day lay my fortune and my heart at your feet, for I believe you have a soul full of riches and of loyalty; and I would intrust you with my life and honor in the fullest confidence. Once more farewell, fair daughter of fair Eve."

On reading this letter—at one gulp, like a drink of cold water in a desert—the mountain weighing on Modeste's heart was lifted; then, perceiving the mistakes she had made in carrying out her scheme, she corrected them at once by making some wrappers for Françoise, on which she wrote her own address at Ingouville, desiring her to come no more to the Chalet. Thenceforth Françoise was to go home, place each letter as it came from Paris in one of these wrappers, and privily repost it in the town. Modeste promised herself always to meet the postman, standing at the front door at the hour when he should pass.

As to the feelings excited in Modeste by this reply, in which poor la Brière's noble heart throbbed under the brilliant mask of Canalis, they were as infinite as the waves which rolled up to die one after another on the shore, while, with her eyes fixed on the ocean, she gave herself up to the joy of having harpooned an angel's soul, so to speak, in the sea of Paris, of having discerned that in a really superior man the heart may sometimes be on a par with genius, and of having been well advised by the voice of presentiment. A mastering interest would henceforth inspire her life. The enclosure of her pretty home, the wires of her cage were broken. Thought could soar on widespread wings.

"Oh, dear father," she cried, looking across to the horizon, "make us very rich!"

Her answer, which Ernest de la Brière read five days later, will tell more than any comments can.

VII.

To Monsieur de Canalis.

"My Friend,—Let me call you so—you have enchanted me, and I would not have you other than you are in this letter—the first; oh, let it not be the last! Who but a poet could ever have so perfectly excused and understood a girl?

"I wish to speak to you with the same sincerity as that which dictated the opening lines of your letter.

"In the first place, happily, you do not know me. I can tell you, gladly, that I am neither that frightful Mademoiselle Vilquin, nor that most noble and most faded Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, who hovers between thirty and fifty, and cannot make up her mind to a creditable age. Cardinal d'Hérouville flourished in Church history before the cardinal who is our only pride, for I do not count lieutenant-generals, or abbés who write small volumes of too big verse, as celebrities.

"Also, I do not live in the Vilquins' gorgeous villa; thank God, not the millionth part of a drop of their blood, chilled in many a counting-house, flows in my veins. I am by birth partly German, partly a child of Southern France; in my brain lurks Teutonic sentiment, and in my blood the energy of the Provençal. I am of noble birth both on my father's and my mother's side; through my mother I have connections on every page of the *Almanach de Gotha.* But I have taken every precaution; it is not in the power of any man, not even of the police, to lift my disguise. I shall remain shrouded, unknown. As to myself and my belongings, *mes propres,* as they say in Normandy, be quite easy; I am at least as good-looking as the little person—happy, though she knows it not—on whom your eyes fell; and I do not think myself a pauper, though I am not attended in my walks by ten sons of peers! I have even seen the contemptible farce played in my behoof of the heiress adored for her millions.

"Finally, make no attempt to find me, not even to win a bet. Alas! though free, I am guarded; in the first place, by myself, and then by very brave folks, who would not hesitate to stick a knife in your heart if you tried to penetrate this retreat. I say this, not to incite your courage or your curiosity; I believe no such sentiments are needed to arouse your interest in me, or to secure your attachment.

"I now proceed to reply to the second and greatly enlarged edition of your sermon.

"Shall I make a confession? When I found you so suspicious, taking me for a *Corinne*—how her improvisations have bored me!—I said to myself that many a tenth Muse had, ere now, led you by the tow-line of curiosity into her inmost vales, and proposed to you to taste the fruits of her schoolgirl Parnassus. . . . Be quite easy, my friend; though I love poetry, I have no copies of verses in my blotting-book; my stockings are, and will remain, perfectly white. You will not be bored by any 'trifles' in one or two volumes. In short, if I should ever say to you 'Come,' you know now that you will not find an old maid, ugly and penniless. . . .

"Oh! my friend, if you could only know how much I regret that you should have come to le Havre! You have altered the aspect of what you call my romance. God alone can weigh in His Almighty hands the treasure I had in store for a man great enough, confiding and clear-sighted enough, to set out on the strength of my letters, after having made his way step by step through all the recesses of my heart, and to come to our first meeting with the guilelessness of a child! I dreamed of such innocence in a genius; you have marred that treasure. I forgive you; you live in Paris; and, as you say, a poet is a man.

"Will you, therefore, take me to be a silly schoolgirl, cherishing the enchanted garden of illusions? Nay, do not amuse yourself with throwing stones at the broken windows of a long ruined castle. You, a man of wit, how is it that you never guessed that Mademoiselle d'Este had already read herself the lecture contained in your first letter? No, my dear

poet, my first note was a pebble flung by a boy loitering along the highway, who thinks it fun to startle a landowner reading his tax-paper under shelter of his fruit-trees; or, rather, was the line carefully fixed by a fisherman from the top of a rock by the seashore, in hope of a miraculous draught.

"All you say so beautifully about family ties has my approbation. The man I shall love, and of whom I shall think myself worthy, shall have my heart and my life with my parents' consent. I would neither distress nor startle them; I am certain of overruling them, and they have no prejudices. Again, I am strong enough to defy the illusions of my fancy. I have built a stronghold with my own hands, and have allowed it to be fortified by the unbounded devotion of those who watch over me as a treasure—not that I am not strong enough to defend myself in open fight; for, may I tell you, fate has clothed me in well-tempered armor on which is stamped the word DISDAIN. I have the deepest horror of everything which suggests self-interest, of all that is not entirely noble, pure, and disinterested. Without being romantic, I worship the beautiful and the ideal; though I have been romantic, all to myself, in my dreams. And so I could recognize the truth —true even to platitude—of what you wrote me as to social life.

"For the present, we are only, and can only be, friends.— Why seek a friend among the unknown? you will ask. Your person is unknown to me; but your mind and heart are known to me; I like them, and I am conscious of infinite feelings in my soul, which demand a man of genius as their only confidant. I do not want the poem of my heart to be wasted; it shall be as beautiful for you as it would have been for God alone. What a precious thing is a trusty comrade to whom we may say what we will! Can you reject the unspoiled blossoms of a genuine girl? They will fly to you as gnats fly to the sunbeams. I am sure that your intellect has never before won you such a success—the confidences of a young girl. Listen to her prattle, accept the songs she has hitherto sung only for herself.

"By and by, if our souls are really akin, if on trial our characters agree, some day an old white-haired retainer will await you, standing by the roadside, and conduct you to a chalet, a villa, a castle, a palace—I do not yet know of what type that temple of Hymen may be—brown and gold, the colors of Austria, which marriage has made so powerful—nor whether such a conclusion may be possible; but confess that it is poetical, and that Mademoiselle d'Este has good ideas. Does she not leave you free? Does she come on jealous tip-toe to glance round Paris drawing-rooms? Does she lay on you the task of some high emprise, the chains which paladins of old voluntarily hung on their arm? What she asks of you is a really spiritual and mystical alliance.

"Come, come to my heart whenever you are unhappy, wounded, weary. Tell me everything, conceal nothing; I shall have balm for all your sorrows. I, my friend, am but twenty; but my mind is fifty, and I have unhappily known through another, my second self, the horrors and ecstasies of passion. I know all that the human heart can possibly contain of meanness and infamy, and yet I am the most honest girl living. No; I have no illusions left; but I have something better—faith and religion. There, I have played first in our game of confidences.

"Whoever my husband may be, if he is my own choice, he may sleep in peace; he might sail for the Indies, and on his return he would find me finishing the tapestry begun at his departure; no eyes would have looked into mine, no man's voice would have tainted the air in my ear; in every stitch he might find a line of the poem of which he was the hero. Even if I should have been taken in by a fair and false exterior, that man would have every flower of my thought, every refinement of my tenderness, all the wordless sacrifices of proud and never suppliant resignation. Yes, I have vowed to myself never even to go out with my husband when he does not want me; I will be the divinity of his hearth. This is my human religion.—But why should I not test and choose the man to whom I shall be what life is to the body? Does a

man ever find life an inconvenience? What is a wife who annoys her husband? Not life, but a sickness. By life, I mean the perfect health which makes every hour an enjoyment.

"To return to your letter, which will always be dear to me. Yes, jesting apart, it really contains what I had hoped for—the expression of prosaic sentiments, which are as necessary to family life as air is to the lungs, and without which happiness is out of the question. What I hoped for in my friend was, that he should act as an honest man, think as a poet, love as women love; and this is now, beyond a doubt, no longer a chimera.

"Farewell, my friend. At present I am poor. That is one of the reasons which make me cling to my mask, my incognito, my impenetrable fortress.

"I read your last poem in the *Revue,* and with what delight, after having mastered the austere and secret loftiness of your soul!

"Will it aggrieve you greatly to be told that a girl beseeches God fervently in your behalf, that she makes you her one thought, and that you have no rival in her heart but her father and mother? Can there be any reason why you should reject these pages that are full of you, that are written for you, that none but you will read? Repay me in kind. I am as yet so little a woman, that your effusions, so long as they are genuine and full, will suffice for the happiness of your

"O. D'ESTE-M."

"Great Heavens! am I in love with her already!" exclaimed the young referendary, when he discovered that he had been sitting for an hour with this letter in his hand after having read it. "What must I do next? She believes she is writing to our great poet. Ought I to carry on the deception? Is she a woman of forty, or a girl of twenty?"

Ernest was fascinated by the abyss of the unknown. The unknown is dark infinitude, and nothing is more enthralling. From that murky vastness flash fires which rend it from time

to time, and light up visions like those of Martin. In a life as full as that of Canalis, an adventure of this kind is swept away like a cornflower among the boulders of a torrent; in that of a young referendary awaiting the reinstatement in power of the party of which his patron was the representative, and who, as a precaution, was dry-nursing Canalis for parliament, this pretty girl—his imagination persistently believed her to be the fair-haired damsel he had seen—was bound to find a place in his heart, and commit all the ravages caused by a romance when it breaks into a humdrum existence, like a wolf into a farmyard. So Ernest thought a great deal about his unknown correspondent, and he replied by the following letter—an elaborate and pretentious letter, but already betraying some passion by its tone of annoyance.

VIII.

To Mademoiselle O. d'Este-M.

"Mademoiselle,—Is it quite fair in you to come and establish yourself in a poor poet's heart with the admitted purpose of leaving him to his fate if he should not be to your mind, and bequeathing to him perennial regrets after showing him, for a few minutes, an image of perfection were it but assumed, or, at least, a first promise of happiness?

"I was wanting in foresight when I requested the letter in which you have begun the display of your elegant assortment of ideas. A man may well fall in love with a stranger who can unite so much daring with so much originality, such fancy with such feeling. Who but would long to know you after reading these first confidences? It is only by a really great effort that I preserve my balance when I think of you, for in you are combined all things that can disturb a man's heart and brain. So I take advantage of the remains of coolness I am able to preserve to put the case humbly before you.

"Do you believe, mademoiselle, that letters which are more or less truthful in relation to life as it really is, and more or less insincere, since the letters we may write to each other must be the expression of the moment when we send them forth, and not the general outcome of our characters—do you believe, I ask, that however fine they may be, these letters can ever take the place of the expression of ourselves we should give through the practical evidence of daily life? Each man is twofold: There is the invisible life of the spirit, which letters may satisfy, and the mechanical life, to which we attach, alas! more importance than you, at your age, can imagine. These two existences ought both to agree with the ideal you cherish, and this, it may be said, very rarely happens.

"The pure, spontaneous, disinterested homage of a solitary soul, at once well-informed and chaste, is one of those heavenly flowers whose color and fragrance are a consolation for every grief, every wound, every mortification entailed by a literary life in Paris; and I thank you with a fervor equal to your own; but after this poetical exchange of my woes in return for the pearls of your charity, what can you expect? I have neither the genius nor the splendid position of Lord Byron; above all, I have not the halo of his artificial damnation and his imaginary social grievances; but what would you have hoped for from him in similar circumstances? His friendship, no doubt. Well, he, who ought only to have been proud, was eaten up by an offensive and sickly vanity which discouraged friendship. I, who am a thousand times less great than he—may not I too have such discords of nature as make life unpleasing, and turn friendship into the most difficult burden? What will you get in return for your dreams? The vexations of a life which will not be wholly yours.

"The bargain is a mad one, for this reason: The poetry of your dreams is but a plagiarism. A young German girl, not half-German like you, but wholly German, in the intoxication of her twenty years, adored Goethe; she made him her friend, her religion, her god, knowing that he was married. Frau Goethe, a good German soul, a poet's wife, lent herself

to this worship with very shrewd complacency—which failed to cure Bettina! But what was the end? The ecstatic married some substantial worthy German. Between ourselves, let us confess that a girl who should have made herself the handmaid of a genius, who should have raised herself to his level by understanding him, and have adored him piously till her death—as one of those divine figures might have done that painters have represented on the doors of their mystical shrines—and who, when Germany should lose Goethe, would have retired to some wilderness never more to see mankind—as Lord Bolingbroke's lady did—let us confess that this girl would have lived for ever in the poet's glory as Mary Magdalen does in the blood-stained triumph of the Saviour.

"If this is sublime, what do you say to the converse of it?

"Being neither Lord Byron nor Goethe, but merely the writer of a few approved poems, I cannot claim the honors of worship. I have little in me of the martyr. I have a heart, but I am also ambitious, for I have to make my fortune, and I am yet young. See me as I am. The King's favor and the patronage of his Ministers afford me a decent maintenance; I have all the habits of a very commonplace man. I go to evening parties exactly like the first fool you meet; but my carriage-wheels do not run, as the present times require, on ground made solid under me by securities in the State funds.

"Though I am not rich, I have not, on the other hand, the distinction conferred by a garret, by neglected work, by glory in penury, on certain men of greater merit than mine; for instance, on d'Arthez.

"What prosaic fifth act will you not find for the enchanted fancy of your young enthusiasm? Let it rest here. If I have been so happy as to seem to you an earthly wonder, you will have been to me something radiant and supernal, like a star that blazes and vanishes. Let nothing tarnish this episode in our lives. By remaining as we are, I may love you, going through one of those mad passions which break down every obstacle and light fires in the heart, which are alarming by their violence out of all proportion to their duration; and,

supposing that I should succeed in pleasing you, we must end in the vulgarest way—marriage, housekeeping, and children! Oh, Bélise and Henriette Chrysale in one, can that be? So, farewell."

IX.

To Monsieur de Canalis.

"My Friend,—Your letter gave me as much pain as pleasure. Perhaps we may soon find it all pleasure to read each other's letters. Understand me. We speak to God, we ask of Him many things; He remains speechless. Now I want to have from you the answers God never gives us. Cannot such a friendship as that of Mademoiselle de Gournay and Montaigne be repeated? Have you not known the household of Sismonde de Sismondi, at Geneva, the most touching home-life ever seen, and of which I have been told—something like that of the Marchese and Marchesa di Pescara, happy even in their old age? Good heavens! is it impossible that there should be two harps, which, though at a distance, respond to each other as in a symphony, and vibrate so as to produce delicious harmony? Man alone, in all creation, is at once the harp, the musician, and the hearer.

"Do you see me fretting after the manner of ordinary women? Do not I know that you go into society and see the handsomest and cleverest women in Paris? Can I not imagine that one of those sirens might embrace you in her cold scales, and that it is she who has sent the answer that grieves me by its prosaic reflections? There is, my friend, something more beautiful than these flowers of Parisian blandishment; there is a flower that grows at the height of those Alpine peaks called men of genius; the pride of humanity, which they fructify by shedding on it the clouds they collect with their heads in the skies; that flower I intend to cultivate and to make it open, for its wild, sweet perfumes will never fail us; they are perennial.

"Do me the honor to believe that in me there is nothing common. If I had been Bettina—for I know to whom you allude—I would never have been Frau von Arnim; and if I had been one of Lord Byron's loves, I should at this moment be in a convent. You have touched me in a sensitive spot.

"You do not know me; you will know me. I feel in myself a sublime something which may be spoken of without vanity. God has implanted in my soul the root of that hybrid plant I have mentioned as native to Alpine heights, and I will not stick it in a flower-pot at my window to see it perish. No, that gorgeous and unique blossom, full of intoxicating fragrance, shall not be dragged through the vulgarities of life; it is yours—yours without a glance having blighted it, yours for ever! Yes, dear one, yours are all my thoughts, even the most secret, the most mad; yours is the heart of a girl without reserve; yours an infinite affection. If I do not like you personally, I shall not marry.

"I can live the life of the heart, the life of your mind, of your feelings; they please me, and I shall always be, as I am now, your friend. There is beauty of nature in you, and that is enough for me. There lies my life. Do not disdain a pretty young handmaiden who, for her part, does not shrink from the idea of being some day the poet's old housekeeper, in some sort his housewife, in some sort his common-sense, in some sort his wealth. This devoted maid, so precious in your lives, is pure, disinterested Friendship, to whom everything is revealed; who listens sometimes with a shake of the head, and who sits late, spinning by the light of the lamp, to be at hand when the poet comes home, soaked by the rain or out of sorts. This is my destiny if I am never to be a happy and faithfully attached wife: I can smile on one as on the other.

"And do not suppose that France will be deeply aggrieved if Mademoiselle d'Este does not give her two or three children, or refuses even to be a Madame Vilquin, or the like? I, for my part, shall never be an old maid. I shall make myself a motherhood by beneficence, and by secretly sharing the existence of a great man, to whom I shall dedicate all my

thoughts and all my earthly efforts. I have the utmost horror of the commonplace. If I should be free and rich—and I know I am young and handsome—I will never become the property of some simpleton under the excuse of his being the son of a peer of France; nor of some good-looking man, who would be the woman of the two; nor of any man who would make me blush twenty times a day at the thought that I was his. Be quite easy on that score.

"My father adores my wishes too much ever to contravene them. If my poet likes me, if I like him, the glorious palace of our love will be built so high that it will be absolutely inaccessible to misfortune. I am an eaglet; you will see it in my eye. I will not repeat what I have already told you, but I put it into fewer words when I assure you that I shall be of all women the most glad to be as completely the captive of love, as I am at this moment of my father's will.

"Come, my friend, let us reduce to the truth of romance what has come upon us by my free-will.

"A girl of lively imagination shut up in a turret is dying to run about in a park which only her eyes can explore; she invents a way of opening her bars, she springs out of window, climbs the park wall, and goes off to sport at her neighbor's. It is the eternal comedy! . . . Well, that girl is my soul, the neighboring park is your genius. Is it not most natural? Was a neighbor ever heard of who complained of his trellis being damaged by pretty feet?

"So much for the poet; but must the ultra-reasonable hero of Molière's comedies have reasons? Here are plenty. My dear Géronte, marriages are commonly made in direct opposition to common-sense. A family makes inquiries as to a young man. If this Léandre, provided by a friendly gossip, or picked up in a ballroom, has robbed no one, if he has no visible stain, if he has as much money as is expected, if he has come from college or has had a legal training, thus satisfying the usual ideas of education, he is allowed to call on a young lady, dressed to receive him from the moment when she gets up, instructed by her mother to be careful of what she says,

and enjoined to keep anything of her soul or heart from being read in her countenance by assuming a set smile, like a dancer finishing a pirouette; she is armed with the most positive instructions as to the perils of showing her true character, and advised not to appear too distressingly knowing. The parents, when all the points of interest are satisfactorily settled between them, are simple-minded enough to recommend the young people to know all they can of each other during the few moments when they are alone, when they talk together, when they walk out—without any kind of freedom, for they know that they are tied already. Under such conditions a man dresses his mind as carefully as his person, and the girl on her side does the same. This miserable farce, carried on with gifts of flowers and jewels and places at the play, is what is called courting a girl.

"This is what I rebel against, and I mean to make legal marriage the outcome of a long marriage of souls. In all a girl's life this is the only moment when she needs reflection, insight, and experience. Her liberty and happiness are at stake, and you place neither the dice nor the box in her hands; she bets on the game; she is but a looker-on. I have the right, the will, and the power to work out my own woe, and I will use them—as my mother did when, guided by instinct, she married the most generous, devoted, and loving of men, who bewitched her one evening by his beauty. I know you to be single, a poet, and handsome. You may be sure that I never should have chosen for my confidant one of your brethren in Apollo who was married. If my mother was attracted by a handsome face, which is perhaps the genius of form, why should not I be attracted by mind and form combined? Shall I know you better after studying you by correspondence than after beginning by the vulgar method of so many months of courting? 'That is the question,' saith Hamlet.

"My plan, my dear Chrysale, has at least the advantage of not compromising our persons. I know that love has its illusions, and every illusion has its morrow. Therein lies

the reason why so many lovers part who believed themselves bound for life. The true test lies in suffering and in happiness. When, after standing this double test of life, two beings have shown all their faults and good qualities, and have learned each other's characters, they may go to the tomb hand in hand; but, my dear Argante, who tells you that our little drama has no future before it? . . . And, at any rate, shall we not have had the pleasure of our correspondence?

"I await your commands, monseigneur, and remain, with all my heart, yours obediently,

"O. D'ESTE-M."

X.

To Mademoiselle O. d'Este-M.

"You are a demon! I love you. Is that what you want, extraordinary girl? Perhaps you only wish to divert your leisure in the country by looking on at the follies of which a poet is capable? That would be a very wicked thing. Your two letters betray just enough of mischief to suggest the doubt to a Parisian. But I am no longer master of myself; my life and future hang on the answer you may send me. Tell me whether the certain possession of an unbounded affection given to you, in defiance of social conventionalities, can touch you; if you will allow me to visit you. There will still be ample room for doubt and agony of mind in the question whether I shall be personally agreeable to you. If your answer is favorable, I alter my life, and bid adieu to many vexations which we are so foolish as to call happiness.

"Happiness, my dear, beautiful, unknown one, is what you have dreamed it; a perfect fusion of feelings, an absolute harmony of souls, a keen sense of ideal beauty—so far as God vouchsafes it to us here below—stamped on the common actions of a life whose round we are bound to follow; above all constancy of heart, far more precious than what we call

fidelity. Can anything be called a sacrifice when the end is the supremest good, the dream of poets and of maidens, the poem to which on entering life—as soon as the spirit tries its wings—every lofty mind looks up with longing, brooding eyes, only to see it dashed to pieces against a stumbling-stone as hard as it is vulgar; for almost every man sees the foot of reality set down at once on that mysterious egg which hardly ever hatches out?

"I will not as yet tell you of myself, of my past, of my character, nor of an affection—almost motherly on one side, and on mine almost filial—in which you have already wrought a change with results in my life that may explain the word sacrifice. You have made me forgetful, not to say ungrateful. Is that enough to satisfy you? Oh! speak! Say one word, and I shall love you till my eyes are closed in death, as Pescara loved his wife, as Romeo loved his Juliet, and faithfully. Our life—mine, at any rate—will be that untroubled happiness of which Dante speaks as being the atmosphere of his 'Paradiso' —a poem infinitely superior to his 'Inferno.'

"Strange to say, it is not myself, but you, whom I doubt in the long meditations in which I have allowed myself—like you, perhaps—to follow the chimerical course of a dream-life. Yes, dear one, I feel in me the strength to love thus, to go on my way to the tomb gently, slowly, always smiling, arm in arm with the woman I love, without a cloud on the fair weather of my soul. Yes, I have courage enough to look forward to our old age together, to see us both with white hair, like the venerable historian of Italy, still inspired by the same affection, but changed by the spirit of each season.

"You see, I can no longer be no more than your friend. Though Chrysale, Oronte, and Argante, you say, have come to life again in me, I am not yet so senile as to drink of a cup held by the fair hands of a veiled woman without feeling a fierce desire to tear away the domino, the mask, and to see her face. Either write no more, or give me hope. I must have a glimpse of you, or throw up the game. Must I say farewell? Will you allow me to sign myself,

"YOUR FRIEND?"

XI.

To Monsieur de Canalis.

"What flattery! How quickly has grave Anselme turned into a dashing Léandre! To what am I to ascribe such a change? Is it to the black I have scribbled on white, to the ideas which are to the flowers of my soul what a rose drawn in black-lead pencil is to the roses of the garden? Or to the remembrance of the girl you took for me, who is to my real self what a waiting-maid is to her mistress? Have we exchanged parts? Am I reason, and are you folly?

"A truce to this nonsense. Your letter made me acquainted with intoxicating joys of soul, the first I have not owed to family feelings. What, a poet has asked, are the ties of blood which weigh so heavily on ordinary souls in comparison with those which Heaven forges for us of mysterious sympathies? Let me thank you—no, there are no thanks for such things. Blessings on you for the happiness you have given me; may you be happy with the gladness you poured into my soul.

"You have explained to me some apparent injustice in social life. There is something brilliant in glory, something masculine which becomes men alone, and God has prohibited women from wearing this halo, while giving us love and tenderness with which to refresh the brows on which its awful light rests. I feel my mission, or rather, you have confirmed me in it.

"Sometimes, my friend, I have risen in the morning in a frame of inconceivable sweetness. A sort of peace, tender and divine, gave me a sense as of Heaven. My first thought was like a blessing. I used to call these mornings my German *levers,* to distinguish them from my southern sunsets, full of heroic deeds of battles, of Roman festivals, and of ardent verse. Well, after having read the letter into which you breathed a fever of impatience, I felt in my heart the lightness of one of those heavenly awakenings, when I loved

air and nature, and felt myself destined to die for some one I loved. One of your poems, 'Le Chant d'une jeune fille,' describes these delicious hours when gladness is sweet, when prayer is a necessity, and it is my favorite piece. Shall I put all my flattery into one line: I think you worthy to be me!

"Your letter, though short, allowed me to read your heart. Yes, I could guess your tumultuous impulses, your excited curiosity, your plans, all the faggots carried (by whom) for the pyre of your heart. But I do not yet know enough of you to comply with your request. Understand, dear one, it is mystery which allows me the freedom that betrays the depths of my soul. When once we have met, farewell to our knowledge of each other.

"Shall we make a bargain? Was the first we made a bad one for you? You gained my esteem by it. And admiration supported by esteem is a great thing, my friend. First write me a sketch of your life in a few words; then tell me about your life in Paris, day by day, without any disguise, as if you were chatting to an old friend: well, then, after that I will carry our friendship a step further. I will see you, my friend, that I promise you; and it is a great deal.

"All this, dear, I warn you, is neither an intrigue nor an adventure; it cannot result in any kind of 'affair' of gallantry, as you men say among yourselves. My life is involved in it, and moreover—a thing which sometimes causes me terrible remorse as to the thoughts I send flying to you in flocks—not less involved is the life of a father and mother I adore, whom I must satisfy in my choice, and who in my friend must find a son.

"How far can you lordly souls, to whom God has given the wings of angels, but not always their perfections, yield to the Family and its petty needs? A text I have pondered over already! Although before going forth to you I said in my heart, 'Be bold!' it has not quaked the less on the road, and I have never deceived myself either as to the roughness of the way or the difficulties of the mountain I had to climb. I have followed it all out in long meditations. Do I not know that

men as eminent as you are have known the love they have inspired quite as well as that they have felt; that they have had more than one romance; and that you, above all, while cherishing those thoroughbred chimeras which a woman will buy at any cost, have gone through more final than first chapters? And yet I could say to myself, 'Be bold!' because I have studied the geography of the high peaks of Humanity that you accuse of coldness—studied them more than you think. Did you not say of Byron and Goethe that they were two colossal masses of egoism and poetry? Ah, my friend, you there fall into the error of superficial minds; but it was perhaps generosity on your part, false modesty, or the hope of evading me.

"The vulgar may be allowed, but you may not, to regard the results of hard work as a development of the individual. Neither Lord Byron, nor Goethe, nor Walter Scott, nor Cuvier, nor any inventor belongs to himself; they are all the slaves of an idea; and this mysterious power is more jealous than a woman, it absorbs them, it makes them or kills them for its own advantage. The visible outcome of this concealed life resembles egoism in its effects; but how dare we say that a man who has sold himself for the delight, the instruction, or the greatness of his age, is an egoist? Is a mother accused of selfishness when she sacrifices everything for her child? Well, the detractors of genius do not discern its teeming maternity, that is all.

"The poet's life is so perpetual a sacrifice that he needs a gigantic organization to enable him to enjoy the pleasures of an ordinary life. Hence, if, like Molière, he insists on living the life of feelings while giving them expression in their most acute crises, what disasters come upon him! for to me the comic side of Molière, as overlaying his private life, is really horrible. The magnanimity of genius seems to me almost divine, and I have classed you with that noble family of egoists so called. Oh! if I had found shallowness, self-interest, and ambition where, as it is, I admire all the flowers of the soul that I love best, you cannot know what slow suffering would have consumed me. I found disappointment sit-

ting at the portal of my sixteenth year; what should I have done if at twenty I had found fame a liar, and the man, who in his writings had expressed so many of the sentiments buried in my heart, incapable of understanding that heart when disclosed to him alone?

"Do you know, my friend, what would have become of me? I am going to admit you to the very depths of my soul. Well, I should have said to my father, 'Bring me any son-in-law to your mind; I give up all free-will; get me married to please yourself!'—and the man might have been a notary, a banker, avaricious, stupid, provincial, as tiresome as a rainy day, as vulgar as a parish voter; he might have been a manufacturer or some brave but brainless soldier—he would have found in me his most resigned and attentive slave. But then—dreadful suicide at every instant!—my soul would never have unfolded in the life-giving beams of the sun it worships. Not a murmur should ever have revealed to my father, my mother, or my children the suicide of the being who is at this moment shaking its prison-bars, flashing lightnings from my eyes, flying to you on outspread pinions, perching like a Polyhymnia in the corner of your study, breathing its atmosphere, and gazing at everything with a mildly inquisitive eye. Sometimes in the fields, where my husband might have taken me, I should have escaped a little way from my babes, and, seeing a lovely morning, would secretly have shed a few very bitter tears. Finally, in my heart, and in the corner of a drawer, I should have stored a little comfort for every girl betrayed by love, poor poetical souls dragged into torments by a smiling face!

"But I believe in you, my friend. This faith purifies the most fantastic notions of my secret ambition, and sometimes —see how frank I can be—I long to be in the middle of the story we have just begun, so assured am I of my feelings, such strength for love do I feel in my heart, such constancy founded on reason, such heroism to fulfil the duty I am creating for myself in case love should ever turn to duty.

"If it were given to you to follow me to the splendid seclusion where I picture our happiness, if you could know my

schemes, you might utter some terrible sentence about madness, and I should perhaps be cruelly punished for sending so much poetry to a poet. Yes, I want to be a living spring, to be as inexhaustible as a beautiful country during the twenty years which nature allows us to shine in. I will keep satiety at a distance by refinements and variety. I will be brave for my love as other women are for the world. I will vary happiness, lend wit to tenderness, and piquancy to faithfulness. I am ambitious; I will kill my past rivals, dispel superficial troubles by the sweetness, the proud self-devotion of a wife, and, for a whole lifetime, give such care to the nest as a bird gives for only a few days. This immense dower ought, and could, only be offered to a great man before being dropped into the mire of vulgar conventionality.

"Now, do you still think my first letter a mistake? A gust of some mysterious will flung me towards you, as a tempest may carry a rose-bush to the heart of a stately willow. And in the letter I keep here—next my heart—you have exclaimed like your ancestor when he set out for the crusades, 'It is God's will!'

"You will be saying, 'How she chatters!' All those about me say, 'Mademoiselle is very silent!'

"O. D'ESTE-M."

These letters seemed very original to those persons to whose kindness the author of the *Comédie Humaine* is beholden for them; but their admiration for this duel between two minds crossing their pens, while their faces were hidden by the strictest incognito, may not be generally shared. Of a hundred spectators, eighty perhaps will be tired of this assault of arms. So the respect due to the majority—even to a possible majority—in every country enjoying a constitutional government, advises the suppression of eleven more letters exchanged by Ernest and Modeste during the month of September; if a flattering majority should clamor for them, let us hope that it may one day afford me the means of restoring them here.

Tempted on by a wit as audacious as the heart beneath

seemed to be adorable, the poor private secretary's really heroic feelings gave themselves the rein in those letters, which each reader's imagination may conceive of as finer than they really are, when picturing this harmony of two unfettered souls. Ernest, indeed, lived only on these dear scraps of paper, as a miser lives on those sent forth by the bank; while in Modeste a deep attachment had grown up in the place of the pleasure of bringing excitement into a life of celebrity, and being, in spite of distance, its chief element. Ernest's affection completed Canalis' glory. Alas! it often takes two men to make one perfect lover, just as in literature a type can only be produced by a compound of the peculiarities of several different characters. How often has a woman said in a drawing-room after some intimate talk: "That man would be my ideal as to his soul, but I feel that I love that other who is no more than a fancy of my senses!"

The last letter written by Modeste, which here follows, gives us a glimpse of the *Isle of Pheasants,* whither the divagations of this correspondence was conducting our lovers.

XII.

To Monsieur de Canalis.

"Be at le Havre on Sunday; go into the church after the one o'clock service, walk round it two or three times, go out without speaking to anyone, without asking anybody a question; wear a white rose in your button-hole. Then return to Paris, you will there find an answer. This answer will not be such as you expect, for I must tell you, the future is not yet in my hands. But should I not be really mad to say *yes* without having seen you? When I have seen you, I can say *no* without offence. I am sure to remain unrecognized."

This was the letter Modeste had sent off the very day before that on which the futile struggle between herself and Dumay had taken place. So she was happy in looking forward with yearning impatience to Sunday, when her eyes would prove her intuitions, her heart, to be right or wrong—one of the

most solemn moments in a woman's life, made, too, as romantic as the most enthusiastic girl could desire by three months of communion soul to soul.

Everybody, excepting her mother, had taken this torpor of expectancy for the placidity of innocence. However stringent the laws of family life and religious bonds, there are still Julies d'Étanges and Clarissas—souls which, like a brimming cup, overflow under the divine touch. Was not Modeste splendid in the fierce energy she brought to bear on repressing her exuberant youth, and remaining concealed? Let us confess that the memory of her sister was more potent than any social limitations; she had sheathed her will in iron that she might not fail her father or her family. But what a turbulent upheaval! and how could a mother fail to perceive it?

On the following day Modeste and Madame Dumay led Madame Mignon out into the noonday sun to her bench among the flowers. The blind woman turned her pale withered face towards the ocean, inhaled the scent of the sea, and took Modeste's hand in her own, for the girl was sitting by her mother. Even as she was about to question her child, the mother hesitated between forgiveness and remonstrance, for she knew that this was love, and to her, as to the false Canalis, Modeste seemed exceptional.

"If only your father may be here in time! If he delays much longer, he will find you alone of those he loved! Promise me once more, Modeste, never to leave him," she said, with motherly persuasiveness.

Modeste raised her mother's hands to her lips, and kissed them softly, as she replied:

"Need I tell you so again?"

"Ah, my child; you see, I myself left my father to go to my husband! And my father was alone too; I was his only child. . . . Is that what God is punishing me for, I wonder?—All I ask you is to marry in agreement with your father's choice, to keep a place for him in your heart, not to sacrifice him to your happiness; to keep him in the bosom of your family. Before I lost my sight I made a note of

"I will never marry without my father's consent."

my wishes; he will carry them out; I have enjoined on him to keep the whole of his fortune, not that I have a thought of distrusting you, but can one ever be sure about a son-in-law? I, my child, was I prudent? A flash of an eye settled my whole life. Beauty, the most deceitful of shows, spoke the truth to me; but if it should ever be the same with you, poor child, swear to me that if appearances should carry you away, as they did your mother, you would leave it to your father to make inquiries as to the character, the heart, and the previous life of the man of your choice, if you make a choice."

"I will never marry without my father's consent," replied Modeste.

On hearing this answer, her mother sat in complete silence, and her half-dead countenance showed that she was pondering on it, as blind people ponder, meditating on her daughter's tone in speaking of it.

"You see, my child," said Madame Mignon, after a long silence, "the thing is this: If Caroline's wrong-doing is killing me by inches, your father would never survive yours; I know him; he would blow his brains out; there would be neither life nor happiness on earth for him . . ."

Modeste walked away a few steps, and returned in a minute.

"Why did you leave me?" asked Madame Mignon.

"You made me cry, mamma," said Modeste.

"Well, my angel, kiss me then. You love no one here? You have no one paying attentions to you?"

"No, mamma," said the little Jesuit.

"Can you swear to that?"

"Really, truly!" cried Modeste.

Madame Mignon said no more; she still doubted.

"In short, if you should choose a husband, your father would know all about it?"

"I promised that to my sister and to you, mother. What sin do you suppose I could commit when every minute I read on my finger, *Remember Bettina!*—Poor little sister!"

At the moment when the words, "Poor little sister!" were

followed by an interval of silence between Modeste and her mother, from whose darkened eyes fell tears which Modeste could not check even by falling at Madame Mignon's knees and crying, "Forgive me; forgive me, mamma!"—at that very moment the worthy Dumay was mounting the hill of Ingouville at a rapid pace, an abnormal incident in the cashier's life.

Three letters had once brought them ruin; one had brought fortune back to them. That morning Dumay had received, by the hand of a captain just returned from the China seas, the first news he had had of his patron and only friend.

To Monsieur Dumay, formerly cashier to the firm of Mignon.

"My dear Dumay,—Barring misadventure by sea, I shall follow closely on the vessel by which I am forwarding this letter; I would not leave the ship to which I am accustomed. I told you, No news was to be good news; but the first words of this letter will rejoice you, for those words are, I have at least seven millions of francs! I am bringing a large part of it in indigo, a third in good bills on London and Paris, another third in bright gold. The money you sent me enabled me to make the sum I had determined on—two millions for each of the girls, and comfort for myself.

"I have been dealing wholesale in opium for the Canton houses, all ten times as rich as I am. You have no notion in Europe of what the rich China merchants are. I traveled from Asia Minor, where I could buy opium cheap, to Canton, where I sold it in bulk to the firms that deal in it.

"My last voyage was to the Malay Archipelago, where I could buy indigo of the first quality with the proceeds of the opium trade. Perhaps I may find that I have five or six hundred thousand francs more, as I am valuing my indigo only at cost price.

"I have been quite well all the time; never an ailment. That is the reward of traveling for one's children! At the beginning of the second year I was able to purchase the *Mignon,* a nice brig of seven hundred tons burden, built of

teak, and lined with the same, and copper-bottomed; fitted throughout to suit my convenience. This, too, is worth something. The seafaring life, the constant change needed in my trading, and hard work, as being in a way my own captain on the high seas, have all kept me in excellent health.

"To speak of all this is to speak of my two girls and my dear wife! I hope that on hearing of my ruin the wretch who robbed me of my Bettina may have deserted her, and the wandering lamb have returned to the cottage. She, no doubt, will need a larger dower.

"My three women and my good Dumay—you have all four been constantly in my thoughts during these three years. Dumay, you are a rich man. Your share, besides my own fortune, amounts to five hundred and sixty thousand francs, which I am forwarding to you by a draft, payable to yourself only, by the firm of Mongenod, who are advised from New York. A few months more and I shall see you all again —well, I hope.

"Now, my dear Dumay, I write to you only, because I wish you to keep the secret of my fortune, and I leave it to you to prepare my dear ones for the joy of my return. I have had enough of trade, and I mean to leave le Havre.

"The choice of my sons-in-law is a very serious matter. It is my intention to repurchase the estate and château of la Bastie, to endow it with an entailed settlement of a hundred thousand francs a year at least, and to petition the King to confer my name and titles on one of my sons-in-law. You, my dear Dumay, know the misfortune that befell us in consequence of the fatal splendor given by wealth. By that I wrecked the honor of one of my daughters. I carried back to Java the most wretched of fathers—an unhappy Dutch merchant with nine millions of francs, whose two daughters had been both carried off by villains! We wept together like two children. So I will not have the amount of my fortune known.

"I shall not land at le Havre, but at Marseilles. My mate is a Provençal, an old retainer of my family, whom I have

enabled to make a little fortune. Castagnould will have my instructions to repurchase la Bastie, and I shall dispose of my indigo through the firm of Mongenod. I shall place my money in the Bank of France, and come home to you, professing to have made no more than about a million of francs in merchandise. My daughters will be reputed to have two hundred thousand francs apiece. Then my great business will be to decide which of my sons-in-law may be worthy to succeed to my name, my arms, and my titles, and to live with us; but they must both be, as you and I are, absolutely steady, firm, loyal, and honest men.

"I have never doubted you, old boy, for a single instant. I have felt sure that my dear and admirable wife, with yours and yourself, will have drawn an impassable fence round my daughter, and that I may press a kiss full of hope on the pure brow of the angel that remains to me. Bettina-Caroline, if you have been able to screen her fault, will have a fortune. After trying war and trade, we will now go in for agriculture, and you must be our steward. Will that suit you?

"And so, old friend, you are master of your line of conduct to the family, to tell them, or to say nothing of my success. I trust to your judgment; you are to say just what you think right. In four years there may have been many changes of character. I make you the judge; I so greatly fear my wife's tender weakness with her daughters.

"Farewell, my dear old Dumay. Tell my wife and daughters that I have never failed to embrace them in my heart every day, morning and evening. The second draft, for forty thousand francs, payable, like the other, to you alone, is for my wife and daughters to go on with.

"Your master and friend,

"Charles Mignon."

"Your father is coming home," said Madame Mignon to her daughter.

"What makes you think that, mamma?" asked Modeste.

"Nothing could make Dumay run but having that news to bring us."

Modeste, lost in her own thoughts, had not seen nor heard Dumay.

"Victory!" shouted the Lieutenant from the gate. "Madame, the Colonel has never been ill, and he is coming home. . . . He is coming on the *Mignon,* a good ship of his own, which, with the cargo he describes to me, must be worth eight or nine hundred thousand francs. But he urgently begs you will say nothing about it; the disaster to our poor lost child has eaten deeply into his heart."

"He has made room in it for a grave then," said Madame Mignon.

"And he ascribes this disaster—as seems to me most probable—to the greed which a large fortune excites in young men. My poor Colonel hopes to find the lost lamb among us here.—Let us rejoice among ourselves, and say nothing to anybody, not even to Latournelle if possible.—Mademoiselle," he added to Modeste apart, "write a letter to your father to tell him of the loss in the family and its terrible consequences, so as to prepare him for the dreadful sight that awaits him; I will undertake that he shall get the letter before arriving at le Havre, for he will be obliged to come through Paris; write fully, you have plenty of time; I will take the letter on Monday; on Monday, no doubt, I shall have to go to Paris——"

Modeste was now afraid lest Dumay and Canalis should meet; she was eager to go up to her room and write to put off the assignation.

"Tell me, mademoiselle," Dumay went on in the humblest tone, but standing in her path, "that your father will find his daughter without a feeling in her heart but that which was in it when he left—of love for her mother."

"I have sworn to my sister and my mother—I have sworn to myself to be my father's comfort, his joy, and his pride, and—I—will be," replied Modeste, with a haughty and scornful glance at Dumay. "Do not mar my joy at knowing that my father will soon be amongst us again by any offensive suspicions. A young girl's heart cannot be hindered from beating; you do not wish me to be a mummy? I belong to my

family; but my heart is my own. If I love any one, my father and mother shall be told of it. Are you satisfied, monsieur?"

"Thank you, mademoiselle," replied Dumay. "You have restored me to life. But you might at least have called me Dumay, even when giving me a slap in the face!"

"Swear to me," said her mother, "that you have never exchanged a word or a glance with any young man."

"I can swear it," said Modeste, smiling, and looking at Dumay, who was studying her, with a mischievous smile like a girl's playing off some joke.

"Can she really be so false!" exclaimed Dumay, when Modeste had gone into the house.

"My daughter Modeste may have her faults," said the mother, "but she is incapable of a lie."

"Well, then, let us make ourselves easy," replied the lieutenant, "and be satisfied that misfortune has closed its account with us."

"God grant it!" said Madame Mignon. "You will see him, Dumay; I can only hear him. . . . There is much sadness in my joy."

Modeste, meanwhile, though happy in the thought of her father's return, was, like Pierrette, distressed to see all her eggs broken. She had hoped for a larger fortune than Dumay had spoken of. She was ambitious for her poet, and wished for at least half of the six millions of which she had written in her second letter. Thus absorbed by her double happiness, and annoyed by the grievance of her comparative poverty, she sat down to her piano, the confidant of so many girls, who tell it their anger, and their wishes, expressing them in their way of playing.

Dumay was talking to his wife, walking to and fro below her window, confiding to her the secret of their good fortune, and questioning her as to her hopes, wishes, and intentions. Madame Dumay, like her husband, had no family but the Mignon family. The husband and wife decided on living in Provence, if the Count should go to Provence, and to leave their money to any child of Modeste's that might need it.

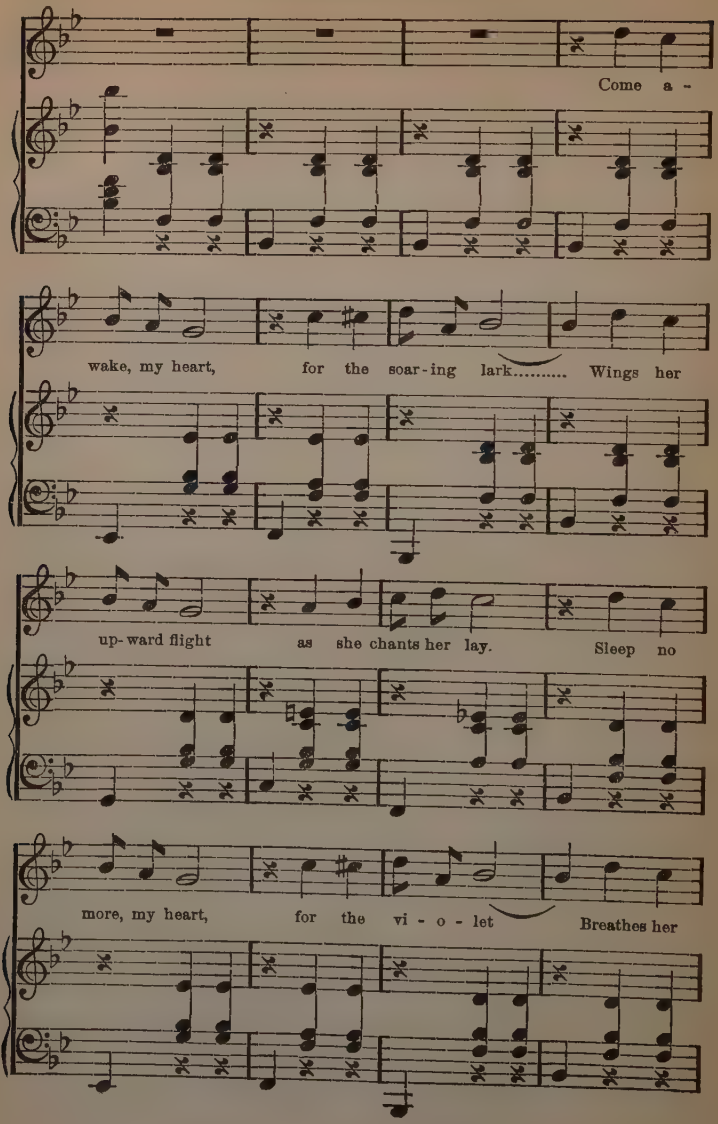
"Listen to Modeste," said Madame Mignon to them; "only a girl in love could compose such a melody without any knowledge of music."

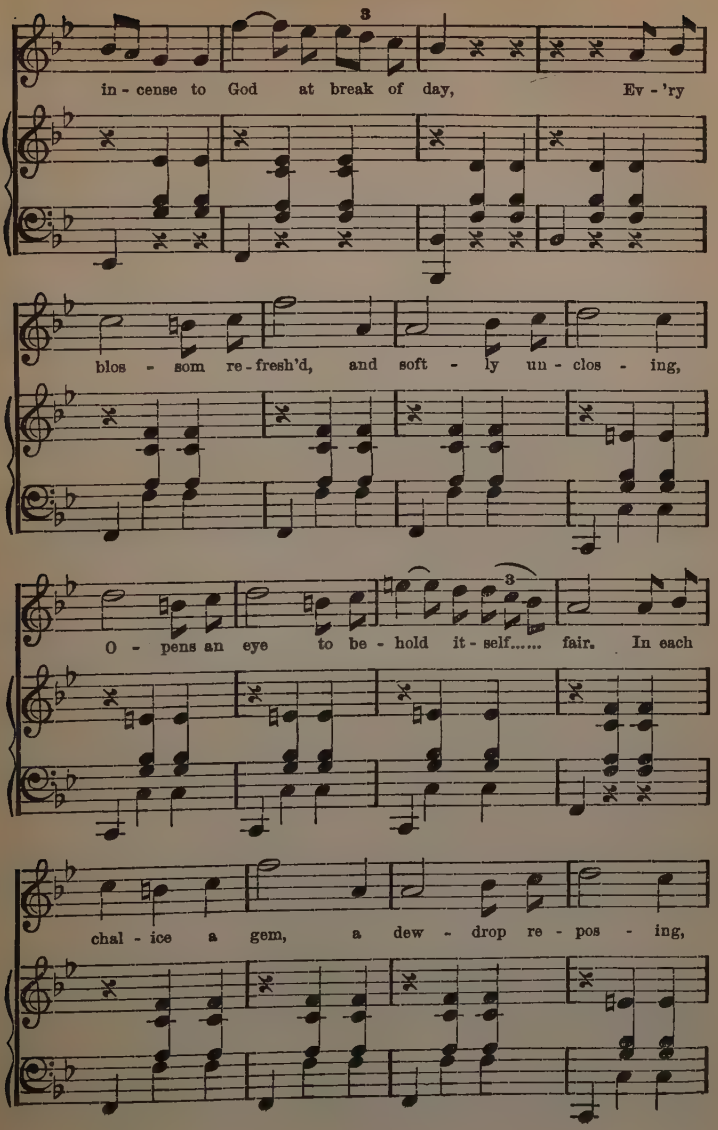
Homes may burn, fortunes may collapse, fathers may come back from their travels, Empires may fall, cholera may ravage the town—a girl's love pursues its flight as nature keeps her course, or that horrible acid discovered by chemistry which might pierce through the earth if it were not absorbed in the centre.

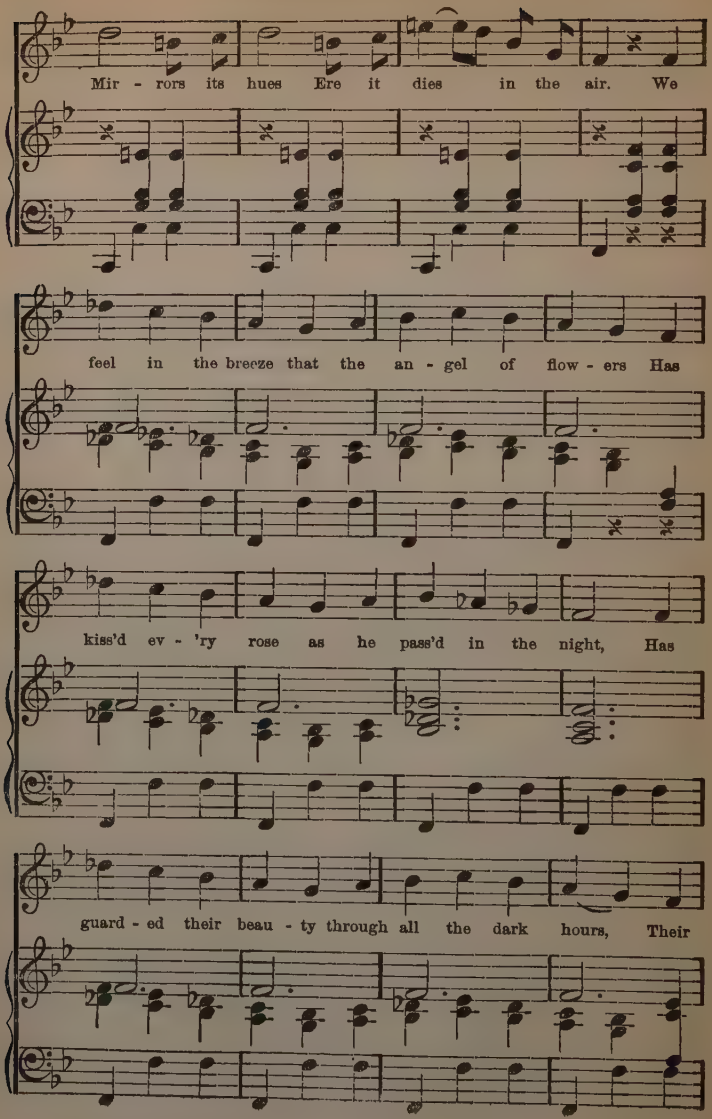
This is the ballad Modeste had improvised to some verses which must be quoted here, though they are to be found in the second volume of poems published by Dauriat; for, to adapt them to the air, the young composer had broken the rhythm by some changes which might puzzle the admirers of a poet who is sometimes too precise.

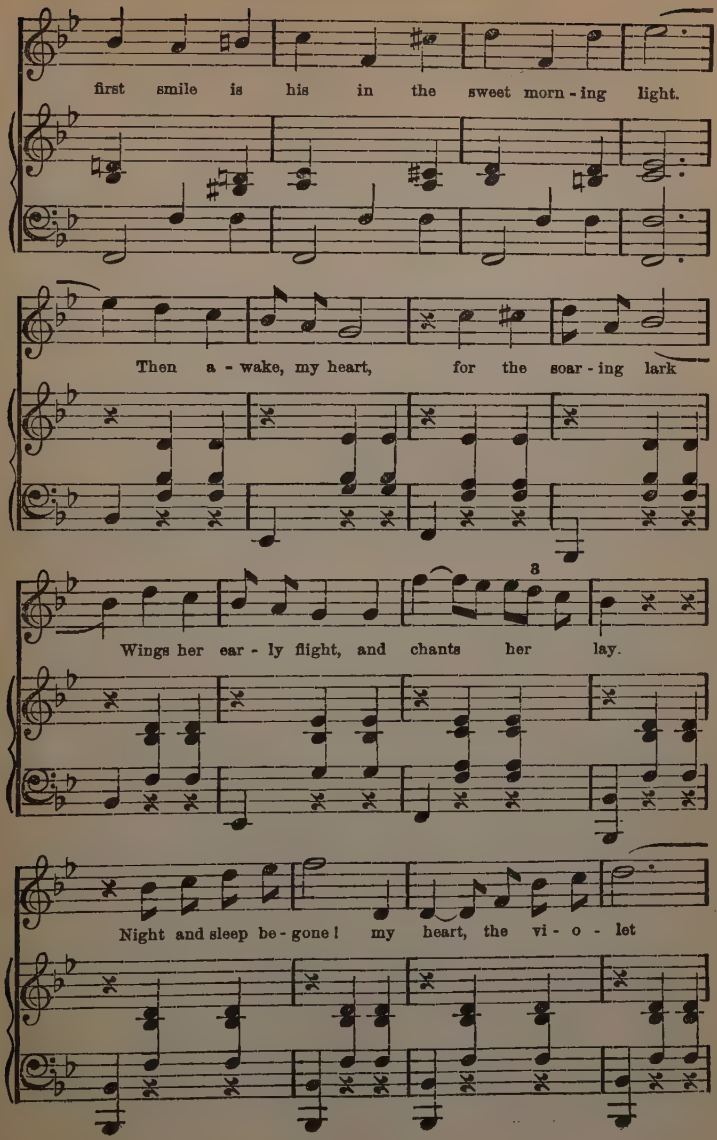
And here, too, since modern typography allows of it, is Modeste's music, to which her exquisite expression lent the charm we admire in the greatest singers—a charm that no printing, were it phonetic or hieroglyphic, could ever represent.

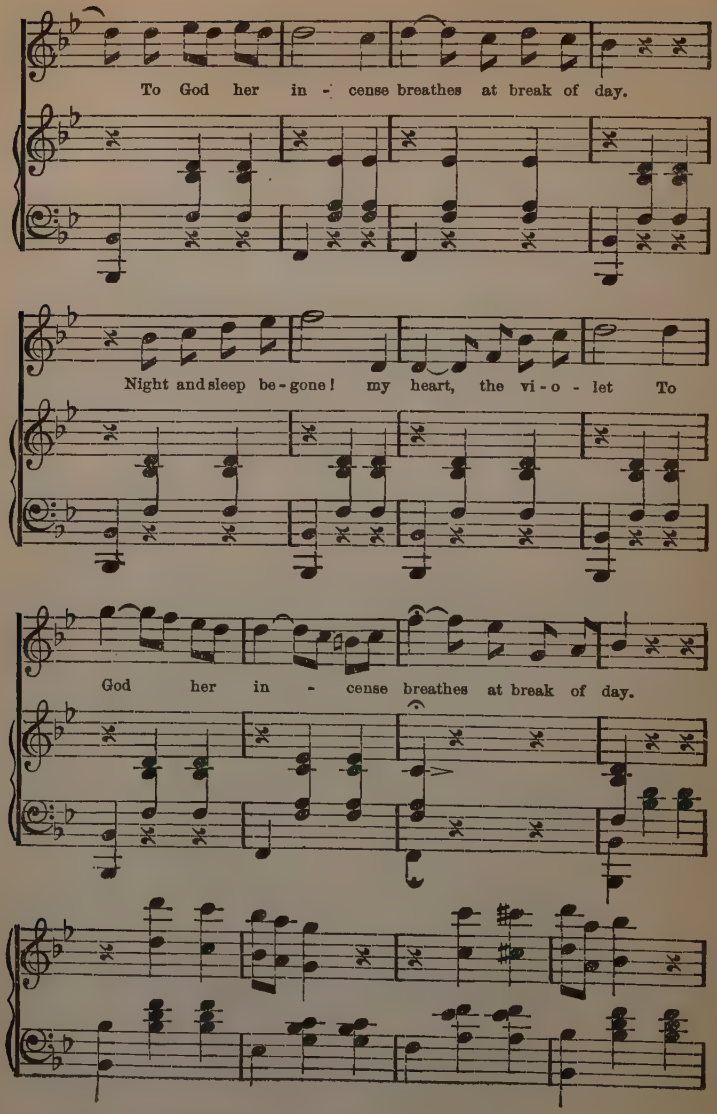
A MAIDEN'S SONG.


Come a -
wake, my heart, for the soar-ing lark..... Wings her
up-ward flight as she chants her lay. Sleep no
more, my heart, for the vi - o - let Breathes her


3
in - cense to God at break of day, Ev - 'ry
blos - som re - fresh'd, and soft - ly un - clos - ing,
3
O - pens an eye to be - hold it - self..... fair. In each
chal - ice a gem, a dew - drop re - pos - ing,


Mir - rors its hues Ere it dies in the air. We
feel in the breeze that the an - gel of flow - ers Has
kiss'd ev - 'ry rose as he pass'd in the night, Has
guard - ed their beau - ty through all the dark hours, Their


first smile is his in the sweet morn - ing light.
Then a - wake, my heart, for the soar - ing lark
3
Wings her ear - ly flight, and chants her lay.
Night and sleep be - gone! my heart, the vi - o - let


To God her in - cense breathes at break of day.
Night and sleep be-gone! my heart, the vi-o-let To
God her in - cense breathes at break of day.

"It is pretty," said Madame Dumay. "Modeste is very musical; that is all."

"She has the very devil in her!" exclaimed the cashier, for the mother's dread had entered into his soul and made his blood run cold.

"She is in love," said Madame Mignon.

By her success in communicating her conviction as to Modeste's secret passion, on the irrefragable evidence of that melody, Madame Mignon chilled the cashier's joy over his patron's return and success. The worthy Breton went off to the town to do his day's business at Gobenheim's; then, before going home to dinner, he called on the Latournelles to mention his fears, and once more to request their help and cooperation.

"Yes, my good friend," said Dumay on the threshold, as he took leave of the notary, "I am of madame's opinion. She is in love, sure enough; beyond that the devil only knows! . . I am disgraced!"

"Do not worry yourself, Dumay," said the little notary. "We certainly, among us all, must be a match for that little lady. Sooner or later every girl who is in love does something rash which betrays her secret; we will talk it over this evening."

So all these persons, devoted to the Mignon family, were still a prey to the same anxiety as had tormented them before the experiment that the old soldier had expected to be decisive. The futility of all these struggles so spurred Dumay's conscience that he would not go to Paris to fetch his fortune

before he had discovered the clue to this enigma. All these hearts, caring far more for sentiment than for self-interest, understood that unless he found this daughter innocently pure, the Colonel might die of grief on finding Bettina dead and his wife blind. The unhappy Dumay's despair made so deep an impression on the Latournelles, that they forgot their loss of Exupère, whom they had sent off to Paris that morning. During the dinner hour, when the three were alone, Monsieur and Madame Latournelle and Butscha turned the matter over under every aspect, and considered every conceivable hypothesis.

"If Modeste were in love with any one at le Havre, she would have quaked last night," said Madame Latournelle, "so her lover must be elsewhere."

"She swore this morning to her mother, in Dumay's presence, that she had not exchanged a glance or a word with a living soul," said the notary.

"Then she loves as I do!" said Butscha.

"And how do you love, my poor boy?" asked Madame Latournelle.

"Madame," replied the little hunchback, "I love all to myself, from afar, almost as far as from hence to the stars."

"And how do you get there, you great goose?" said Madame Latournelle, smiling at him.

"Ah, madame, what you take to be a hump is the sheath for my wings."

"Then this explains your seal!" exclaimed the lawyer.

The clerk's seal was a star, with the motto, *Fulgens, sequar* —Shine, and I will follow you—the device of the house of Chastillonest.

"A beautiful creature may be as diffident as the most hideous," said Butscha, as if talking to himself. "Modeste is quite clever enough to have feared lest she should be loved only for her beauty."

Hunchbacks are wonderful creatures, and due entirely to civilization; for, in the scheme of nature, weak or deformed beings ought to perish. A curvature or twist of the spinal

column gives to these men, who seem to be Nature's outcasts, a flashing look, in which is concentrated a greater quantity of nervous fluids than other men can command, in the very centre where they are elaborated and act, and whence they are sent forth like a light to vivify their inmost being. Certain forces are the result, detected occasionally by magnetism, but most frequently lost in the waste places of the spiritual world. Try to find a hunchback who is not gifted in some remarkable way, either with a cheerful wit, superlative malignity, or sublime kindliness. These beings, privileged beings though they know it not, live within themselves as Butscha did, when they have not exhausted their splendidly concentrated powers in the battle they have fought to conquer obstacles and remain alive.

In this way we may explain the superstitious and popular traditions, which we owe to the belief in gnomes, in frightful dwarfs, in misshapen fairies—the whole race of bottles, as Rabelais has it, that contain rare balsams and elixirs.

Thus Butscha almost read Modeste; and with the eagerness of a hopeless lover, of a slave ever ready to die like the soldiers who, deserted and alone amid Russian snows, still shouted *"Vive l'Empereur!"* he dreamed of discovering her secret for himself alone.

As his chief and Madame Latournelle walked up to the Chalet, he followed them with a very anxious mien, for it was imperative that he should conceal from every watchful eye, from every listening ear, the snare in which he meant to entrap the girl. There should be a flashing glance, a start detected, as when a surgeon lays his finger on a hidden injury.

That evening Gobenheim did not join them; Butscha was Monsieur Dumay's partner against Monsieur and Madame Latournelle. At about nine o'clock, while Modeste was absent preparing her mother's room, Madame Mignon and her friends could talk openly; but the poor clerk, stricken by the conviction which had come on him too, seemed as far away from the discussion as Gobenheim had been the night before.

"Why, Butscha, what ails you?" exclaimed Madame La-

tournelle, astonished at him. "One might think you had lost all your relations!"

A tear started to the poor fellow's eye—a foundling, deserted by a Swedish sailor, and his mother dead of grief in the workhouse!

"I have no one in the world but you," he replied in husky tones; "and your compassion is too pious ever to be withdrawn from me, for I will never cease to deserve your kindness."

The answer struck an equally sensitive chord in those present, that of delicacy.

"We all love you, Monsieur Butscha," said Madame Mignon with emotion.

"I have six hundred thousand francs of my own!" cried the worthy Dumay. "You shall be a notary at le Havre, and Latournelle's successor."

The American, for her part, had taken the poor hunchback's hand and pressed it.

"You have six hundred thousand francs!" cried Latournelle, pricking up his ears at this speech, "and you let these ladies stay here! And Modeste has no horse! And she no longer has lessons in music, in painting, in——"

"Oh, he has only had the money a few hours," exclaimed the American wife.

"Hush!" said Madame Mignon. While this was going on, the dignified Madame Latournelle had recovered herself. She turned to Butscha.

"My dear boy," said she, "you have so much affection around you, that I never considered the particular bearing of a common phrase as applied to you; but you may thank me for my blunder, since it has shown you what friends you have earned by your beautiful nature."

"Then you have some news of Monsieur Mignon?" asked the notary.

"He is coming home," said Madame Mignon; "but we must keep it secret.—When my husband hears how Butscha has clung to us, and that he has shown us the warmest and most disinterested friendship when the world turned its back on us,

he will not leave you to provide for him entirely, Dumay. And so, my friend," she added, trying to turn towards Butscha, "you may proceed at once to deal with Latournelle——"

"He is of full age, five-and-twenty," said Latournelle. "And, on my part, it is paying off a debt, my dear fellow, if I give you the refusal of my practice."

Butscha kissed Madame Mignon's hand, wetting it with his tears, and showed a tearful face when Modeste opened the drawing-room door.

"Who has been distressing my mysterious dwarf?" she asked.

"Oh, mademoiselle, do we children nursed in sorrow ever shed tears of grief? I have just received such marks of attachment, that I was moved with tenderness for all those in whom I liked to believe I had found relations. I am to be a notary; I may grow rich. Ah, ha! Poor Butscha may some day be rich Butscha. You do not know what audacity exists in this abortion!" he exclaimed.

The hunchback struck himself hard on his cavernous breast, and placed himself in front of the fireplace after giving Modeste a look that stole like a gleam from under his heavy, drooping eyelids; for in this unforeseen conjuncture he had found his chance of sounding his sovereign lady's heart.

For an instant Dumay fancied that the clerk had dared aspire to Modeste; he exchanged looks with his friends which were understood by all, and which made them gaze at the little hunchback with a sort of dread mingled with curiosity.

"I—I too—have my dreams," Butscha went on, not taking his eyes off Modeste.

The girl looked down instinctively, in a way which was a revelation to the clerk. "You love romances; allow me, in the midst of my joy, to confide my secret to you, and you will tell me if the end of the romance I have dreamed of for my life is possible. . . . If not, of what use is fortune. To me, more than any one else, money is happiness, since to me happiness means the enriching of the one I love! You

who know so many things, mademoiselle, tell me whether a man can be loved independently of his person—handsome or ugly, and for his soul alone."

Modeste looked up at Butscha. It was a terrible, questioning look, for at this moment Modeste shared Dumay's suspicions. "When I am rich, I shall look out for some poor but beautiful girl, a foundling like myself, who has suffered much, and is very unhappy; I will write to her, comfort her, be her good genius; she shall read my heart, my soul; she shall have all my wealth, in both kinds—my gold, offered with great delicacy, and my mind, beautified by all the graces which the misfortune of birth has denied to my grotesque form! And I will remain hidden, like a cause which science seeks. God perhaps is not beautiful.—The girl will naturally be curious and want to see me; but I shall tell her that I am a monster of ugliness, I will describe myself as hideous——"

At this, Modeste looked hard in his face. If she had said, "What do you know of my love affairs?" it could not have been more explicit.

"If I am so happy as to be loved for the poetry of my soul! —if, some day, I might seem to that woman to be only slightly deformed, confess that I shall be happier than the handsomest of men, than even a man of genius beloved by such a heavenly creature as you are——"

The blush that mounted to Modeste's face betrayed almost the whole of the girl's secret to the hunchback.

"Well, now, if a man can enrich the girl he loves, and charm her heart irrespective of his person, is that the way to be loved?—This has been the poor hunchback's dream—yesterday's dream; for to-day your adorable mother has given me the clue to my future treasure by promising to facilitate my acquiring an office and connection. Still, before becoming a Gobenheim, I must know whether such a horrible transformation will achieve its end. What do you think, mademoiselle, on your part?"

Modeste was so taken by surprise, that she did not observe Butscha's appeal to her judgment. The lover's snare was

better contrived than the soldier's; for the poor girl, quite bewildered, stood speechless.

"Poor Butscha!" said Madame Latournelle to her husband, "is he going mad?"

"You want to play the fairy tale of Beauty and the Beast," said Modeste at last, "and you forget that the Beast is turned into Prince Charming."

"Do you think so?" said the dwarf. "Now I have always imagined that transformation to symbolize the phenomenon of the soul becoming visible and eclipsing the body by its radiant glory. If I should never be loved, I shall remain invisible, that is all!—You and yours, madame," said he to his mistress, "instead of having a dwarf at your command, will have a life and fortune."

Butscha returned to his seat, and said to the three players, affecting perfect calmness:

"Who deals?"

But to himself he was saying with grief, "She wants to be loved for her own sake; she is corresponding with some sham great man, and how far has she gone?"

"My dear mamma, it has struck a quarter to ten," said Modeste to her mother.

Madame Mignon bid her friends good-night, and went to bed.

Those who insist on loving in secret may be watched over by Pyrenean dogs, mothers, Dumays, Latournelles—they are in no danger from these; but a lover! It is diamond cut diamond, fire against fire, wit against wit, a perfect equation, of which the terms are equal and interchangeable.

On Sunday morning Butscha was beforehand with Madame Latournelle, who always went to escort Modeste to mass, and stayed cruising about outside the Chalet, waiting for the postman.

"Have you a letter for Mademoiselle Modeste this morning?" he asked of that humble functionary as he approached.

"No, monsieur, no——"

"We have been good customers of the Government for some time past!" exclaimed the clerk.

"I believe you!" replied the postman.

Modeste from her room saw and heard this little interview; she posted herself at her window at this hour, behind the Venetian shutter, to watch for the postman.

She went down and out into the little garden, where, in a husky voice, she called out, "Monsieur Butscha."

"Here am I, mademoiselle," said the hunchback, coming to the little gate, which Modeste herself opened.

"Will you tell me whether you include among your titles to the affection of a woman the disgraceful espionage you choose to exercise?" asked the girl, trying to overwhelm her slave by her gaze and queenly attitude.

"Yes, mademoiselle," he proudly replied. "I had never imagined," he added in a low voice, "that a worm could do good service to a star! But so it is. Would you rather have your heart read by your mother, Monsieur Dumay, and Madame Latournelle, than by a poor creature, almost an outcast from life, who is yours as much as one of the flowers you cut to gratify you for a moment? They all know that you love; I alone know how. Take me as you would take a watch-dog; I will obey you, I will protect you, I will never bark, and I will have no opinions about you. All I ask is that you will let me be of some use to you. Your father placed a Dumay in your menagerie; try a Butscha, and you will find it quite another story! A poor Butscha, who asks for nothing, not even for a bone."

"Well, I will take you on trial," said Modeste, who only wished to be rid of so sharp a guardian. "Go at once to all the hotels at Graville and le Havre, and ask if a M. Arthur has arrived from England——"

"Listen, mademoiselle," said Butscha respectfully, but interrupting Modeste, "I will just go for a walk on the beach, and that will be all that is necessary, for you do not wish me to go to church, that is all."

Modeste looked at the hunchback in blank astonishment.

"Yes, mademoiselle, though you have wrapped your face in wadding and a handkerchief, you have no cold; though you have a double veil to your hat, it is only to see without being seen."

"What endows you with so much penetration?" cried Modeste, reddening.

"Why, mademoiselle, you have no stays on! A cold would not require you to disguise your figure by putting on several petticoats, to hide your hands in old gloves, and your pretty feet in hideous boots, to dress yourself anyhow, to——"

"That will do," said she. "But, now, how am I sure that you will obey me?"

"My master wanted to go to Sainte-Adresse, and was rather put out; but as he is really very kind, he would not deprive me of my Sunday. Well, I will propose to him that we should go——"

"Go then, and I shall trust to you——"

"Are you sure you will not want me at le Havre?"

"Quite.—Listen, mysterious dwarf, and look up," she said, pointing to a cloudless sky. "Can you see the track left by the bird that flew across just now? Well, my actions, as pure as that pure air, leave no more trace than that. Reassure Dumay and the Latournelles, reassure my mother; and be sure that this hand" (and she held out to him a slender little hand with upturned finger-tips, transparent to the light) "will never be given away, never even warmed by the kiss of what is called a lover, before my father's return."

"And why do you want me to keep away from church today?"

"Do you cross-question me, after all I have done you the honor to tell you and require of you?"

Butscha bowed without replying, and hastened home, enraptured at thus entering the service of his anonymous mistress.

An hour later Monsieur and Madame Latournelle came to fetch Modeste, who complained of a dreadful toothache.

"I really had not strength to dress," said she.

"Well, then, stay at home," said the notary's wife.

"No, no. I will go and pray for my father's safe return," replied Modeste; "and I thought that if I wrapped up well, it would do me more good than harm to go out."

So Mademoiselle Mignon set out alone with Latournelle. She would not take his arm for fear of being questioned as to the internal tremor that agitated her at the idea of so soon seeing her great poet. One look, the first, was about to decide her future existence.

Is there in the life of man a more exquisite moment than that of the first promised meeting? Can the feelings that lie buried in his heart, and that then burst into life, ever be known again? Can he ever again feel the pleasure that he finds, as did Ernest de la Brière, in choosing his best razors, his finest shirts, spotless collars, and impeccable clothes? We deify everything that is associated with that supreme hour. We imagine poems in our hearts, secret poems as beautiful as the woman's, and on the day when each reads the other's soul all is over! Is it not the same with these things as with the blossom of those wild fruits, at once sharp and sweet, lost in forest depths, the delight of the sun, no doubt; or, as Canalis says in "The Maiden's Song," the gladness of the plant itself which the Angel of Flowers has allowed to see its own beauty?

This leads to the reflection that la Brière, a modest soul, like many another penurious being for whom life begins with toil and money difficulties, had never yet been loved. He had arrived at le Havre the night before, and had at once gone to bed, like a coquette, to efface every trace of his journey; and he had now, after taking a bath, just completed a carefully advantageous toilet. This, perhaps, is the place for giving a full-length portrait of him, if only to justify the last letter Modeste was ever to write to him.

Born of a good family at Toulouse, distantly connected with that Minister who took him under his patronage, Ernest has the well-bred air which comes of an education begun from

the cradle; the habit of business has given it solidity without effort, for pedantry is the rock on which precocious gravity is commonly wrecked. Of medium height, his face is attractively refined and gentle; his complexion warm, though colorless, was at that time set off by a slender moustache and a small imperial, a *virgule à la Mazarin*. But for these manly witnesses, he would, perhaps, have looked too much like a girl dressed up, so delicate is the cut of his face and lips, so natural is it to attribute to a woman teeth of transparent enamel and almost artificial evenness. Add to these feminine characteristics a voice as sweet as his looks, as gentle as his turquoise blue eyes, with Oriental lids, and you will perfectly understand how it was that the Minister had nicknamed his young private secretary Mademoiselle de la Brière. His broad, smooth forehead, framed under thick black hair, has a dreamy look that does not contradict the expression of his countenance, which is wholly melancholy. The prominence of the eyebrows, though delicately arched, overshadows the eyes, and adds to this look of melancholy by the sadness,—a physical sadness, so to speak—that the eyelids give when they half close the eyes. This secret bashfulness, to which we give the name of modesty, characterizes his features and person. The whole result will, perhaps, be better understood if we add that the theory of perfect drawing demands greater length in the shape of the head, more space between the chin, which ends abruptly, and the forehead, on which the hair grows too low. Thus the face looks flattened. Work had already graven a furrow between the eyebrows, which were thick, and too nearly met, like those of all jealous natures. Though la Brière was as yet slight, his figure was one of those which, developing late, are unexpectedly stout at the age of thirty.

The young man might very well have typified, to those who are familiar with French history, the royal and mysterious personality of Louis XIII., with his melancholy diffidence for no known reason, pallid under his crown, loving the fatigue of hunting, and hating work; so timid with his

mistress as to respect her virtue, so indifferent to his friend as to leave him to be beheaded; explicable only by his remorse at having avenged his father on his mother—either a Catholic Hamlet or the victim of some incurable malady. But the canker-worm which paled the King's cheek and unnerved his strength, was as yet, in Ernest, no more than simple distrust of himself, the shyness of a man to whom no woman had ever said, "How I love you!" and, above all, wasted self-sacrifice. After hearing the knell of a monarchy in the fall of a minister, the poor boy had found in Canalis a rock hidden under tempting mosses; he was seeking a despotism to worship; and this uneasiness, that of a dog in search of a master, gave him the expression of the king who found his. These clouds and feelings, this "pale cast" over his whole person, made his face far more attractive than the young secretary himself imagined, annoyed as he was sometimes to find himself classed by women as a *beau ténébreux*—gloomily handsome; a style gone quite out of fashion at a time when every man would gladly keep the clarions of advertisement for his own exclusive use.

So Ernest the diffident had sought the adornment of the most fashionable clothes. For this interview, when everything would depend on first sight, he donned black trousers and carefully polished boots, a sulphur-colored waistcoat, revealing an excessively fine shirt fastened with opal studs, a black necktie, and a short blue coat, which looked as if it had been glued to his back and waist by some new process; his rosette graced the button-hole. He wore smart kid gloves of the color of Florentine bronze, and held in his left hand a light cane and his hat, with a certain Louis-quatorze air; thus showing, as the sacred place demanded, his carefully combed hair, on which the light shed satin-like reflections. Standing sentry under the porch from the very beginning of the service, he studied the church while watching all the Christians, more especially those in petticoats, who came to dip their fingers in the holy water.

As Modeste came in, an inner voice cried out, "'Tis he!"

That coat and figure, so essentially Parisian, the rosette, the gloves, the walking-stick, the scented hair—none of these things were native to le Havre. And when la Brière turned to look at the notary's tall and showy wife, the little notary himself and the bundle—a word dedicated to this sense by women—under which Modeste had concealed herself, though she was fully prepared, the poor child was stricken to the heart by the aspect of this romantic countenance, in the bright daylight from the open door. She could not be mistaken; a small white rose almost hid the rosette. Would Ernest recognize his unknown fair hidden under an old hat and a double veil? Modeste was so fearful of the clairvoyance of love that she walked with an elderly shuffle.

"Wife," said Latournelle, as he went to his place, "that man does not belong to le Havre."

"So many strangers come through," replied the lady.

"But do strangers ever think of coming to see our church, which is not more than two centuries old?"

Ernest remained in the porch all through the service without seeing any woman who realized his hopes. Modeste, on her part, could not control her trembling till near the end. She was agitated by joys which she alone could have described. At last she heard on the pavement the step of a gentleman, for, Mass being over, Ernest was walking round the church, where no one remained but the *dilettanti* of prayer, who became to him the object of anxious and piercing scrutiny. He remarked the excessive trembling of the prayer-book held by the veiled lady as he passed her; and as she was the only one who hid her face, he conceived some suspicions, confirmed by Modeste's dress, which he studied with the care of an inquisitive lover.

When Madame Latournelle left the church, he followed her at a decent distance, and saw her, with Modeste, go into the house in the Rue Royale, where Mademoiselle Mignon usually waited till the hour of vespers. Ernest studied the house, decorated with escutcheons, and asked of a passer-by the name of the owner, who was mentioned almost with pride as Monsieur Latournelle, the first notary of le Havre.

As he lounged down the Rue Royale, trying to catch a glimpse of the interior of the house, Modeste could see her lover; she then declared herself to be too ill to attend vespers, and Madame Latournelle kept her company. So poor Ernest had his cruise for his pains. He dared not go to loiter about Ingouville; he made it a point of honor to obey. and returned to Paris after writing a letter while waiting for the coach, and posting it for Françoise Cochet to receive next morning with the postmark of le Havre.

Monsieur and Madame Latournelle dined at the Chalet every Sunday, taking Modeste home after vespers. As soon as the young lady felt better, they all went up to Ingouville, followed by Butscha. Modeste, quite happy, now dressed herself beautifully. As she went down to dinner she forgot all about her disguise of the morning and her cold, and sang:

Night and sleep begone! My heart, the violet
To God her incense breathes at break of day!

Butscha felt a thrill as he beheld Modeste, she seemed to him so completely changed; for the wings of love fluttered, as it were, on her shoulders, she looked like a sylph, and her cheeks glowed with the divine hue of happiness.

"Whose words are those which you have set to such a pretty air?" Madame Mignon asked her daughter.

"They are by Canalis, mamma," she replied, turning in an instant to the finest crimson, from her neck to the roots of her hair.

"Canalis!" exclaimed the dwarf, who learned from Modeste's tone and blush all of her secret that he as yet knew not. "He, the great poet, does he write ballads?"

"They are some simple lines," replied she, "to which I have ventured to adapt some reminiscences of German airs."

"No, no, my child," said Madame Mignon; "that music is your own, my dear!"

Modeste, feeling herself grow hotter and hotter, went out into the garden, taking Butscha with her.

"You can do me a great service," said she, in an undertone. "Dumay is affecting discretion to my mother and me as to the amount of the fortune my father is bringing home, and I want to know the truth. Has not Dumay, at different times, sent papa five hundred and something thousand francs? My father is not the man to stay abroad four years simply to double his capital. Now a ship is coming in that is all his own, and the share he offers Dumay amounts to nearly six hundred thousand francs."

"We need not question Dumay," said Butscha. "Your father had lost, as you know, four millions of francs before his departure, these he has no doubt recovered; he would certainly have given Dumay ten per cent of his profits; so, from the fortune the worthy Breton confesses to, my chief and I calculate that the Colonel's must amount to six or seven millions——"

"Oh, father!" cried Modeste, crossing her arms, and raising her eyes to heaven, "you have given me a second life!"

"Oh, mademoiselle, you love a poet! A man of that stamp is more or less of a Narcissus. Will he love you as he ought? A craftsman in words, always absorbed in fitting sentences together, is very fatiguing. A poet, mademoiselle, is not poetry—no more than the seed is the flower."

"Butscha, I never saw such a handsome man!"

"Beauty, mademoiselle, is a veil which often serves to hide many imperfections."

"He has the most angelic heart that heaven——"

"God grant you may be right," said the dwarf, clasping his hands. "May you be happy! That man, like yourself, will have a slave in Jean Butscha. I shall then no longer be a notary; I shall give myself up to study—to science——"

"And why?"

"Well, mademoiselle, to bring up your children, if you will condescend to allow me to be their tutor. . . . Oh! if you would accept a piece of advice! Look here, let me go to work my own way. I could ferret out this man's life and habits, could discover if he is kind, if he is violent or gentle, if he will

show you the respect you deserve, if he is capable of loving you perfectly, preferring you to all else, even to his own talent——"

"What can it matter if I love him?" said she simply.

"To be sure, that is true," cried the hunchback.

At this moment Madame Mignon was saying to her friends:

"My daughter has this day seen the man she loves."

"Can it be that sulphur-colored waistcoat that puzzled you so much, Latournelle?" cried the notary's wife. "That young man had a pretty white rosebud in his button-hole——"

"Ah!" said the mother, "a token to be known by!"

"He wore the rosette of the Legion of Honor," Madame Latournelle went on. "He is a charming youth! But we are all wrong; Modeste never raised her veil, she was huddled up like a pauper, and——"

"And she said she was ill," added the notary. "But she has thrown off her mufflers, and is perfectly well now!"

"It is incomprehensible!" said Dumay.

"Alas! it is as clear as day," said the notary.

"My child," said Madame Mignon to Modeste, who came in, followed by Butscha, "did you happen to see in church this morning a well-dressed little man with a white rose in his button-hole, and the rosette——"

"I saw him," Butscha hastily put in, seeing by the attention of the whole party what a trap Modeste might fall into. "It was Grindot, the famous architect, with whom the town is treating for the restoration of the church. He came from Paris, and I found him this morning examining the outside as I set out for Sainte-Adresse."

"Oh! he is an architect! He puzzled me greatly," said Modeste, to whom Butscha had secured time to recover herself.

Dumay looked askance at Butscha. Modeste, put on her guard, assumed an impenetrable demeanor. Dumay's suspicions were excited to the highest pitch, and he resolved to go next day to the Mairie and ascertain whether the expected

architect had in fact been at le Havre. Butscha, on his part, very uneasy as to Modeste's ultimate fate, decided on starting for Paris to set a watch over Canalis.

Gobenheim arrived in time to play a rubber, and his presence repressed the ferment of feeling. Modeste awaited her mother's bedtime almost with impatience; she wanted to write, and this is the letter her love dictated to her when she thought that every one was asleep.

XIII.

To Monsieur de Canalis.

"Oh, my best-beloved friend, what vile libels are your portraits displayed in the print-sellers' windows! And I who was happy with that detestable lithograph! I am quite shy of loving such a handsome man. No, I cannot conceive that Paris women can be so stupid as not to see, one and all, that you are the fulfilment of their dreams. You neglected! You loveless!—I do not believe a word you have said about your obscure and laborious life, your devotion to an idol till now vainly sought for. You have been too well loved, monsieur; your brow, as pale and smooth as a magnolia petal, plainly shows it, and I shall be wretched.

"What am I now?—Ah! why have you called me forth to life? In one instant I felt that I had shed my ponderous chrysalis! My soul burst the crystal which held it captive; it rushed through my veins. In short, the cold silence of things suddenly ceased to me; everything in nature spoke to me. The old church to me was luminous; its vault, glittering with gold and azure, like that of an Italian church, sparkled above my head. The melodious strains, sung by angels to martyrs to make them forget their anguish, sounded through the organ! The hideous pavement of le Havre seemed like a flowery path. I recognized the sea as an old

friend, whose language, full of sympathy, I had never known well enough. I saw how the roses in my garden and greenhouse had long worshiped me, and whispered to me to love! They all smiled on me on my return from church; and, to crown all, I heard your name of Melchior murmured by the flower-bells; I saw it written on the clouds! Yes, I am indeed alive, thanks to you—poet more beautiful than that cold and prim Lord Byron, whose face is as dull as the English climate. Wedded to you by one only of your Oriental glances which pierced my black veil, you transfused your blood into my veins, and it fired me from head to foot. Ah, we do not feel life like that when our mothers bring us into the world? A blow dealt to you would fall on me at the same instant, and my existence henceforth can only be accounted for by your mind. I know now the purpose of the divine harmony of music; it was invented by the angels to express love.

"To be a genius and handsome too, my Melchior, is too much. A man should have a choice at his birth. But when I think of the treasures of tenderness and affection you have lavished on me, especially during this last month, I wonder whether I am dreaming! Nay, you must be hiding some mystery. What woman could give you up without dying of it? Yes, jealousy has entered my heart with such love as I could not believe in! Could I imagine such a conflagration?

"A new and inconceivable vagary! I now wish you were ugly! What follies I committed when I got home! Every yellow dahlia reminded me of your pretty waistcoat, every white rose was a friend, and I greeted them with a look which was yours, as I am wholly! The color of the gentleman's well-fitting gloves—everything, to the sound of his step on the flagstones—everything is so exactly represented by my memory that, sixty years hence, I shall still see the smallest details of this high day, the particular color of the atmosphere, and the gleam of the sunbeam reflected from a pillar; I shall hear the prayer which your advent broke into; I shall breathe the incense from the altar; and I shall fancy that I feel above our heads the hands of the priest who was giving us

the final benediction just as you went past. That good Abbé Marcellin has married us already. The superhuman joy of experiencing this world of new and unexpected emotions can only be equaled by the joy I feel in telling you of them, in rendering up all my happiness to him who pours it into my soul with the unstinting bounty of the sun. So no more veils, my beloved! Come, oh, come back soon! I will unmask with joy.

"You have, no doubt, heard of the firm of Mignon of le Havre? Well, in consequence of an irreparable loss, I am the sole heiress of the family. Do not scorn us, you who are descended from one of the heroes of Auvergne. The arms of Mignon de la Bastie will not dishonor those of Canalis. They are *gules, a bend sable charged with three besants, in each quarter a patriarchal cross or,* surmounted by a cardinal's hat, and the cord and tassels as mantling. My dear, I will be faithful to our motto, *Una fides, unus Dominus!* The true faith, and one Lord.

"Perhaps, my friend, you will think there is some irony in my name after all I have here confessed. It is Modeste. Thus, I did not altogether cheat you in signing 'O. d'Este-M.' Nor did I deceive you in speaking of my fortune; it will, I believe, amount to the sum which has made you so virtuous. And I know so surely that to you money is so unimportant a consideration, that I can write of it unaffectedly. At the same time, you must let me tell you how glad I am to be able to endow our happiness with the freedom of action and movement that wealth gives, the power of saying, 'Let us go——' when the fancy takes us to see a foreign land, of flying off in a comfortable carriage, seated side by side, without a care about money; and happy, too, to give you the right of saying to the King, 'I have such a fortune as you require in your peers!'

"In this, Modeste Mignon can be of some service to you, and her money will find noble uses. As to your humble servant, you have seen her once, at her window in a wrapper. —Yes, the fair-haired daughter of Eve was your unknown

correspondent; but how little does the Modeste of to-day resemble her whom you then saw! She was wrapped in a shroud, and this other—have I not told you so?—has derived from you the life of life. Pure and permitted love, a love that my father, now at last returning from his travels and with riches, will sanction, has uplifted me with its childlike but powerful hand from the depths of the tomb where I was sleeping. You awoke me as the sun awakes the flowers. The glance of her you love is not now that of the bold-faced little Modeste! Oh, no; it is bashful, it has glimpses of happiness, and veils itself under chaste eyelids. My fear now is that I cannot deserve my lot. The King has appeared in his glory; my liege has now a mere vassal, who implores his forgiveness for taking such liberties, as the thimble-rigger with loaded dice did after cheating the Chevalier de Grammont.

"Yes, beloved poet, I will be your 'Mignon,' but a happier Mignon than Goethe's, for you will leave me to dwell in my native land, won't you?—in your heart.

"As I write this bridal wish, a nightingale in the Vilquins' park has just answered for you. Oh! let me quickly hear that the nightingale, with his long-drawn note, so pure, so clear, so full, inundating my heart with love and gladness, like an Annunciation, has not lied.

"My father will pass through Paris on his way from Marseilles. The house of Mongenod, his correspondents, will know his address; go to see him, my dearest Melchior, tell him that you love me, and do not try to tell him how much I love you; let that be a secret always between us and God! I, dear adored one, will tell my mother everything. She, a daughter of Wallenrod Tustall-Bartenstild, will justify me by her caresses; she will be made happy by our secret and romantic poem, at once human and divine! You have the daughter's pledge; now obtain the consent of the Comte de la Bastie, the father of your own

"MODESTE.

"*P. S.*—Above all, do not come to le Havre without having

obtained my father's permission; and, if you love me, you will be able to discover him on his way through Paris."

"What are you doing at this time of night, Mademoiselle Modeste?" asked Dumay.

"I am writing to my father," she replied to the old soldier. "Did you not tell me that you were starting to-morrow?"

Dumay had no answer to this, and went to bed, while Modeste wrote a long letter to her father.

Next day Françoise Cochet, alarmed at seeing the Havre postmark, came up to the Chalet to deliver to her young mistress the following letter, and carry away that which Modeste had written.

To Mademoiselle O. d'Este-M.

"My heart warns me that you were the woman, so carefully veiled and disguised, placed between Monsieur and Madame Latournelle, who have but one child, a son. Ah, dearly loved one! if you are of humble rank, devoid of position, distinction, or even fortune, you cannot imagine what my joy would be. You must know me by this time; why not tell me the whole truth? I am no poet excepting through love, in my heart, and for you. Oh, what immense affection I must have to stay here, in this Hôtel de Normandie, and not walk up to Ingouville, that I can see from my windows? Will you love me as I love you? To have to leave le Havre for Paris in such uncertainty! Is not that being punished for loving as if I had committed a crime?—I have obeyed you blindly.

"Ah! let me soon have a letter; for, if you are mysterious, I have returned mystery for mystery, and I must at last throw off the mask of my incognito, and tell you how little I am a poet, abdicating the glory you have lent me."

This letter greatly disturbed Modeste; she could not withdraw her own, which Françoise had already posted by the time she read the last lines once more, puzzled as to their

meaning; but she went up to her room, and wrote an answer, asking for explanations.

During these little incidents, others, equally small, were happening in the town, and were destined to make Modeste forget her uneasiness. Dumay, having gone early to le Havre, at once knew that no architect had arrived there the night before last. Furious at the lie told him by Butscha, which revealed a complicity which he would know the meaning of, he hurried from the Mairie to the Latournelles.

"Where is your Master Butscha?" asked he of his friend the notary, on not finding the clerk in the office.

"Butscha, my dear fellow? He is on the road to Paris, whisked away by the steamboat. Early this morning, on the quay, he met a sailor, who told him that his father, the Swedish sailor, has come into some money. Butscha's father went to India, it would seem, and served some prince, a Mahratta, and he is now in Paris——"

"A pack of lies! Shameful! Monstrous! Oh, I will find that damned hunchback; I am going to Paris, and on purpose for that!" cried Dumay. "Butscha is deceiving us! He knows something about Modeste, and has never told us. If he dares meddle in the matter—— He shall never be a notary; I will cast him back on his mother, in the mire, in the——"

"Come, my friend, never hang a man without trying him," replied Latournelle, terrified at Dumay's exasperation.

After explaining on what his suspicions were founded, Dumay begged Madame Latournelle to stay at the Chalet with Modeste during his absence.

"You will find the Colonel in Paris," said the notary. "In the shipping news this morning, in the *Commerce* newspaper, under the heading of Marseilles.—Here, look!" he said, handing him the sheet, 'The *Bettina-Mignon,* Captain Mignon, arrived October 16th,' and to-day is the 17th. At this moment all le Havre knows of the master's return."

Dumay requested Gobenheim to dispense henceforth with his services; he then returned at once to the Chalet, going

in at the moment when Modeste had just closed her letters to her father and to Canalis. The two letters were exactly alike in shape and thickness, differing only in the address. Modeste thought she had laid that to her father over that to her Melchior, and had done just the reverse. This mistake, so common in the trifles of life, led to the discovery of her secret by her mother and Dumay.

The lieutenant was talking eagerly to Madame Mignon in the drawing-room, confiding to her the fresh fears to which Modeste's duplicity and Butscha's connivance had given rise.

"I tell you, madame," he exclaimed, "he is a viper we have warmed on our hearth; there is not room for a soul in these fag-ends of humanity."

Modeste had slipped the letter to her father into her pocket, fancying that it was the letter to her lover, and went down with that addressed to Canalis in her hand, hearing Dumay speak of starting immediately for Paris.

"What is wrong with my poor Mysterious Dwarf, and why are you talking so loud?" said she at the door of the drawing-room.

"Butscha, mademoiselle, set out for Paris this morning, and you, no doubt, can say why!—It must be to carry on some intrigue with the so-called little architect in a sulphur-colored waistcoat, who, unluckily for the hunchback's falsehood, has not yet been to le Havre."

Modeste was startled; she guessed that the dwarf had gone off to make his own inquiries as to the poet's manners and customs; she turned pale, and sat down.

"I will be after him; I will find him!" said Dumay. "That, no doubt, is the letter for your father?" he added, holding out his hand. "I will send it to Mongenod's—if only my Colonel and I do not cross on the way."

Modeste gave him the letter. Little Dumay, who could read without spectacles, mechanically read the address:

"Monsieur le Baron de Canalis, Rue de Paradis-Poissonnière, No. 29!" he exclaimed. "What is the meaning of this?"

"Ah! my child, then he is the man you love!" cried Madame Mignon. "The verses you set to music are by him——"

"And it is his portrait that you have upstairs in a frame!" added Dumay.

"Give me back that letter, Monsieur Dumay," said Modeste, drawing herself up, like a lioness defending her cubs.

"Here it is, mademoiselle," he replied. Modeste slipped the letter into her bosom, and held out to Dumay that addressed to her father.

"I know you to be capable of anything, Dumay," said she; "but if you move a single step towards Monsieur de Canalis, I will take one out of this house, and never come back!"

"You will kill your mother!" replied Dumay, who went to call his wife.

The poor mother had fainted away, stricken to the heart by Modeste's threatening speech.

"Good-bye, wife," said the Breton, embracing the little American. "Save the mother; I am going to save the daughter."

He left Modeste and Madame Dumay with Madame Mignon, made his preparations in a few minutes, and went down to le Havre. An hour later he set off by post with the swiftness which passion or interest alone can give to the wheels.

Madame Mignon soon revived under her daughter's care, and went up to her room, leaning on Modeste's arm; the only reproach she uttered when they were alone was to say, "Unhappy child! what have you done? Why hide anything from me? Am I so stern?"

"Why, of course, I was going to tell you everything," replied the girl in tears.

She told her mother the whole story; she read her all the letters and replies; she plucked the rose of her poem to pieces, petal by petal, to lay in the heart of the kind German lady; this took up half the day. When her confession was ended, and she saw something like a smile on the lips of the too indulgent blind woman, she threw herself into her arms with tears.

"Oh, mother!" cried she, in the midst of her sobs, "you whose heart is of gold, and all poetry, and like some choice vessel moulded by God to contain the one pure and heavenly love that can fill a whole life!—you whom I long to imitate by loving nothing on earth but my husband—you must know how bitter are these tears which I shed at this moment, which fall wet on your hands.—The butterfly with iridescent wings, that beautiful second soul which your daughter has cherished with maternal care—my love, my sacred love, that inspired and living mystery, has fallen into vulgar hands that will tear its wings and its veil under the cruel pretext of enlightening me, of inquiring whether genius is as correct as a banker, if my Melchior is capable of amassing dividends, if he has some love affair to be unearthed, if he is not guilty in vulgar eyes of some youthful episode, which to our love is what a cloud is to the sun. What are they going to do?—Here, feel my hand; I am in a fever! They will kill him!"

Modeste, seized by a deadly shivering fit, was obliged to go to bed, alarming her mother, Madame Latournelle, and Madame Dumay, who nursed her while the Lieutenant was traveling to Paris, whither the logic of events transfers our tale for the moment.

Men who are truly modest, like Ernest de la Brière, and especially those who, though knowing their own value, are neither loved nor appreciated, will understand the infinite rapture in which the young secretary reveled as he read Modeste's letter. After discovering the wit and greatness of his mind, his young and guileless but wily mistress thought him handsome. This is the supremest flattery. Why? Because Beauty is no doubt the Master's signature on the work into which He has infused His soul; it is the divinity made manifest; and to see it where it does not exist, to create it by the power of an enchanted eye, is—is it not?—the crowning magic of love.

And the poor young fellow could exclaim to himself with the ecstasy of an applauded author:

"At last I am loved!"

When once a woman, a courtesan, or an innocent girl has let the words escape her, "How handsome you are!" even if it be untrue, if the man allows the subtle poison of the words to enter his brain, he is thenceforth tied by eternal bonds to the bewitching liar, to the truthful or deluded woman; she is his world; he thirsts for this testimony; he would never weary of it, not even if he were a prince.

Ernest proudly paced his room; he stood in front of the mirror—three-quarter face, in profile; he tried to criticise his own features, but a diabolical, insinuating voice said to him, "Modeste is right!" and he came back to the letter and read it again. He saw the heavenly fair one, he talked to her! Then, in the midst of his rapture, came the overwhelming thought, "She believes me to be Canalis, and she is a millionaire!"

All his happiness fell with a crash, as a man falls when, walking in his sleep, he has reached the ridge of a roof, and hearing a voice, steps forward, and is dashed to pieces on the stones.

"But for the halo of glory, I should be ugly!" cried he. "What a horrible predicament I have got myself into!"

La Brière was too thoroughly the man of his letters, too entirely the pure and noble soul he had shown in them, to hesitate at the voice of honor. He at once resolved to go and confess everything to Modeste's father if he were in Paris, and to inform Canalis fully of the outcome of their very Parisian practical joke. To this sensitive young fellow the vastness of Modeste's fortune was a casting reason. Above all, he would not be suspected of having used the stimulation of this correspondence, though on his side so perfectly sincere, for filching a fortune. Tears stood in his eyes as he walked from his rooms in the Rue Chantereine to Mongenod the banker's, whose prosperity, connections, and prospects were partly the work of the Minister to whom he himself was indebted.

At the time when la Brière was closeted with the head of the house of Mongenod, and acquiring all the information he

needed in his strange position, such a scene was taking place in Canalis' house as Dumay's hasty departure might have led us to expect.

Dumay, like a true soldier of the Imperial School, whose blood had been boiling all through his journey, conceived of a poet as an irresponsible fellow, a man who fooled in rhyme, living in a garret, dressed in black cloth white at all the seams, whose boots sometimes had soles, whose linen was anonymous, who always looked as if he had just dropped from the clouds, when he was not scribbling as intently as Butscha. But the ferment that muttered in his brain and heart received a sort of cold shower-bath when he reached the poet's handsome residence, saw a man cleaning a carriage in the courtyard, found himself in a splendid dining-room with another servant dressed like a banker, to whom the groom had referred him, and who looked him from head to foot as he said that Monsieur le Baron could not see any one.

"Monsieur le Baron has a meeting to-day," he added, "at the Council of State."

"I am right?" asked Dumay; "this is the house of Monsieur de Canalis, who writes poetry?"

"Monsieur le Baron de Canalis," said the footman, "is no doubt the great poet you mean; but is also Master of Appeals to the State Council, and attached to the Foreign Office."

Dumay, who had come to box a rhymester's ears, to use his own contemptuous expression, had found a State functionary. The drawing-room where he was kept waiting, remarkable for its magnificence, presented to his contemplation the row of crosses that glittered on Canalis' evening coat, left by the servant over the back of a chair. Presently he was attracted by the sheen and workmanship of a silver gilt cup, and the words, "The gift of MADAME," struck his eye. Opposite this, on a bracket, was a Sèvres vase, over which was engraved, "Given by Madame la Dauphine." These silent warnings restored Dumay to his common sense, while the man-servant was asking his master whether he could receive a stranger, who had come from le Havre on purpose to see him—his name Dumay.

"What is he like?" asked Canalis.

"Has a good hat, and the red ribbon."

At a nod of assent, the man went out, and returned announcing:

"Monsieur Dumay."

When he heard his own name, when he stood before Canalis in a study as costly as it was elegant, his feet on a carpet quite as good as the best in the Mignons' old house, when he met the glance prepared by the poet, who was playing with the tassels of a sumptuous dressing-gown, Dumay was so absolutely dumfounded that he left the great man to speak first.

"To what, monsieur, do I owe the honor of this visit?"

"Monsieur," Dumay began, still standing.

"If you have much to say, pray be seated," said Canalis, interrupting him; and the poet sank back into his large easy-chair, and crossed his legs, raising the upper one to rock his foot on a level with his eye, while staring hard at Dumay, who, to use his own soldier's phrase, felt like a dummy.

"I am listening, monsieur," said the poet. "My time is precious; I am due at the office——"

"Monsieur," said Dumay, "I will be brief. You have bewitched—how I know not—a young lady at le Havre—handsome, rich, the last and only hope of two noble families, and I have come to ask you your intentions."

Canalis, who for the last three months had been absorbed by serious matters, who aimed at promotion to the grade of Commander of the Legion of Honor, and to be Minister to a German Court, had totally forgotten the letter from le Havre.

"I?" cried he.

"You," replied Dumay.

"Monsieur," said Canalis, smiling, "I know no more what you mean than if you were talking Hebrew. I bewitch a young girl?—I, who——?" A lordly smile curled the poet's lip. "Come, monsieur. I am not a boy that I should amuse myself by stealing poor wild fruit when I have ample orchards open to me, where the finest peaches in the world ripen. All

Paris knows where my affections are placed. That there should be at le Havre a young lady suffering from some admiration, of which I am wholly unworthy, for the verses I have written, my dear sir, would not astonish me! Nothing is commoner. Look there! You see that handsome ebony-box inlaid with mother-of-pearl, and fitted with iron wrought as fine as lace. That coffer belonged to Pope Leo X.; it was given to me by the Duchesse de Chaulieu, who had it from the King of Spain.—I have devoted it to the preservation of all the letters I receive from every part of Europe, written by unknown women and girls. Oh! I have the greatest respect for those posies of flowers culled from the very soul, and sent to me in a moment of enthusiasm that is indeed worthy of all respect. Yes, to me the impulse of a heart is a noble and beautiful thing!—Others, mocking spirits, screw up such notes to light their cigars, or give them to their wives for curl-papers; I—who am a bachelor, monsieur—have too much delicate feeling not to treasure these artless and disinterested offerings in a kind of tabernacle; indeed, I hoard them with no little reverence, and when I am dying I will see them burnt under my eyes. So much the worse for those who think me ridiculous! What is to be said? I am grateful by nature, and these testimonials help me to endure the criticisms and annoyances of a literary life. When I receive in my spine the broadside of an enemy in ambush behind a newspaper, I look at that chest and say to myself, 'There are, here and there, a few souls whose wounds have been healed, or beguiled or staunched by me——'"

The rhodomontade, pronounced with the cleverness of a great actor, petrified the little cashier, whose eyes dilated while his astonishment amused the great poet.

"To you," the peacock went on, still spreading his tail, "out of respect for a position I can sympathize with, I can but propose that you should open that treasury, and look there for your young lady; but I never forget names. I know what I am saying, and you are mistaken . . ."

"And this is what happens to a poor girl in this gulf called

Paris!" cried Dumay. "The idol of her parents, the delight of her friends, the hope, the darling of them all; the pride of her family, for whom six persons have made a rampart against disaster of their hearts and their fortunes."

Dumay paused, and then went on:

"Well, monsieur, you are a great poet, and I am but a poor soldier. For fifteen years, while I served my country in the ranks, I felt the wind of many a bullet in my face, I crossed Siberia, where I was kept a prisoner, the Russians flung me on a truck like a bale of goods, I have endured everything; I have seen no end of my comrades die—— And you, monsieur, have sent such a chill through my bones as I never felt before!"

Dumay believed that he had touched the poet; he had flattered him—an almost impossible achievement, for the ambitious man had by this time forgotten the first phial of precious balm that Praise had broken on his head.

"You see, my brave friend," said the poet solemnly, as he laid his hand on Dumay's shoulder, feeling it a strange thing that he should be able to make a soldier of the Empire shiver, "this girl is everything to you—— But to society, what is she? Nothing. If at this moment the most important mandarin in China is closing his eyes and putting the Empire into mourning, does that grieve you deeply? In India the English are killing thousands of men as good as we are; and at this moment, as I speak, the most charming woman is there being burnt—but you have had coffee for breakfast all the same? Indeed, at this minute, here in Paris, you may find several mothers of families lying on straw and bringing a child into the world without a rag to wrap it in!—And here is some delicious tea in a cup that cost five louis, and I am writing verses to make the ladies of Paris exclaim, *'Charming, charming! divine, exquisite! it goes to the heart!'*

"Social nature, like Mother Nature herself, is great at forgetting. Ten years hence you will be amazed at the step you have taken. You are in a city where we die, and marry, and worship each other at an assignation; where a girl suffocates

herself, while a man of genius and his cargo of ideas full of humanitarian benefits go to the bottom, side by side, often under the same roof, and knowing nothing of each other.—And you come and expect us to swoon with anguish at this commonplace question, 'Is a certain young person at le Havre this or that, or is she not?'—Oh, you really are——"

"And you call yourself a poet!" cried Dumay. "But do you really feel nothing of what you depict?"

"If we felt all the misery or joy that we describe, we should be worn out in a few months, like old shoes," said the poet, smiling. "Listen, you shall not have come from le Havre to Paris, and to me, Canalis, without having anything to take back with you. Soldier!"—and Canalis had the figure and gesture of an Homeric hero—"learn this from the poet, 'Every noble feeling in each of us is a poem so essentially individual that our best friend, our self, takes no interest in it. It is a treasure belonging to each alone——' "

"Forgive me for interrupting you," said Dumay, who gazed at Canalis with horror, "but you have been to le Havre?"

"I spent a night and day there in the spring of 1824 on my way to London."

"You are a man of honor," Dumay went on. "Can you give me your word of honor that you do not know Mademoiselle Modeste Mignon?"

"This is the first time I ever heard her name," replied Canalis.

"Oh, monsieur," cried Dumay, "into what dark intrigue am I about to plunge? May I count on you to help me in my inquiries? For some one, I am certain, has been making use of your name. You ought to have received a letter yesterday from le Havre."

"I have received nothing! You may be sure, monsieur, that I will do all that lies in my power to be of service to you."

Dumay took leave, his heart full of anxiety, believing that hideous little Butscha had hidden himself in the semblance of the great poet to captivate Modeste; while Butscha, on the

contrary, as keen and clever as a prince who avenges himself, sharper than a spy, was making inquisition into the poet's life and actions, escaping detection by his insignificance like an insect working its way into the young wood of a tree.

The Breton had but just left when la Brière came into his friend's room. Canalis naturally mentioned the visit of this man from le Havre.

"Hah!" said Ernest, "Modeste Mignon! I have come on purpose to speak about that affair."

"Bless me!" cried Canalis, "do you mean to say I have made a conquest by proxy?"

"Why, yes, that is the turning-point of the drama. My friend, I am loved by the sweetest girl in the world, beautiful enough to shine among the beauties of Paris, with a heart and education worthy of Clarissa Harlowe; she has seen me, she likes my looks—and she believes me to be the great poet Canalis.

"Nor is this all: Modeste Mignon is of good birth, and Mongenod has just told me that her father, the Comte de la Bastie, must have a fortune of something like six millions of francs. This father has come home within three days, and I have just begged him to arrange an interview with me, at two o'clock—through Mongenod, who in his note mentioned that it concerned his daughter's happiness.—You will understand that before meeting the father I was bound to tell you everything."

"Among all the blossoms that open to the sunshine of fame," said Canalis with emphasis, "there is one glorious plant which, like the orange, bears its golden fruit amid the thousand united perfumes of wit and beauty! one elegant shrub, one true passion, one perfect happiness—and it has evaded me!" Canalis kept his eyes on the carpet that Ernest might not read them. "How," he went on after a pause, to recover his presence of mind, "how is it possible, among the intoxicating scents of these fancy-paper notes, and these phrases that mount to the brain, to detect the genuine heart—the girl, the woman, in whom true love is hidden under the livery

of flattery, who loves us for ourselves, and who offers us happiness? No one could do it but an angel or a demon, and I am only an ambitious Master of Appeals!

"Ah, my dear fellow, fame transforms us into a butt, a target for a thousand arrows. One of us owed his marriage to a copy of hydraulic verses; and I, even more ingratiating, more the ladies' man than he, shall have missed my chance—for you love this poor girl?" said he, looking at la Brière.

"Oh!" cried la Brière.

"Well, then, be happy, Ernest," said the poet, taking his friend's arm and leaning on it. "As it turns out, I shall not have been ungrateful to you! You are handsomely rewarded for your devotion, for I will be generously helpful to your happiness."

Canalis was furious, but he could not behave otherwise, so he took the benefit of his ill-luck by using it as a pedestal. A tear rose to the young secretary's eye; he threw his arms round Canalis and embraced him.

"Oh, Canalis, I did not half know you!"

"What did you expect? It takes time to travel round the world," replied the poet with emphatic irony.

"Consider," said la Brière, "that immense fortune——"

"Well, my friend, will it not be in good hands?" cried Canalis, pointing his effusiveness by a charming gesture.

"Melchior," said la Brière, "I am yours in life and death."

He wrung the poet's hands, and went away hastily; he was eager to see Monsieur Mignon.

At this hour the Comte de la Bastie was suffering all the sorrows that had been lurking for him as their prey. He had learned from his daughter's letter the facts of Bettina-Caroline's death and her mother's blindness; and Dumay had just told him the story of the terrible imbroglio of Modeste's love affair.

"Leave me to myself," he said to his faithful friend.

When the Lieutenant had closed the door, the unhappy father threw himself on a couch and lay there, his head in

his hands, shedding the few thin tears that lie under the eyelids of a man of fifty-six without falling, wetting them, but drying quickly and rising again, the last dews of the autumn of human life.

"To have children you love and a wife you adore, is to have many hearts and offer them all to the dagger!" cried he, starting to his feet with a furious bound, and pacing the room. "To be a father is to give oneself over to misfortune, bound hand and foot. If I meet that fellow d'Estourny I will kill him. Daughters! Who would have daughters? One gets hold of a scoundrel; and the other, my Modeste, of what? A coward, who deludes her under the gilt-paper armor of a poet. If only it were Canalis! There would be no great harm done. But this Scapin of a lover!—I will throttle him with my own hands!" said he to himself, with an involuntary gesture of energetic atrocity. "And what then," he thought, "if my child should die of grief."

Mechanically he looked out of the window of the Hotel des Princes, and came back to sit down on the divan, where he remained motionless. The fatigue of six voyages to the Indies, the anxieties of investments, the dangers he had met and escaped, care and sorrow had silvered Charles Mignon's hair. His fine military face, clean in outline, was bronzed by the sun of Malaysia, China, and Asia Minor, and had assumed an imposing expression, which grief at this moment made sublime.

"And Mongenod tells me I can perfectly trust the young man who is to come to speak to me about my daughter!——"

Ernest de la Brière was just then announced by one of the servants whom the Comte de la Bastie had attached to him in the course of these four years, and had picked out from the crowd of men under him.

"You come, monsieur, with an introduction from my friend Mongenod?" said he.

"Yes," replied Ernest, gazing timidly at a face as gloomy as Othello's. "My name is Ernest de la Brière, connected, monsieur, with the family of the late Prime Minister; I was his private secretary when he was in office. At his fall, His

Excellency was good enough to place me in the Court of Exchequer, where I am now first-class Referendary, and where I may rise to be a Master——"

"And what has all this to do with Mademoiselle de la Bastie?" asked Charles Mignon.

"Monsieur, I love her, and it is my unhoped-for happiness to be loved by her. . . . Listen, monsieur," said Ernest, interrupting a terrible movement on the part of the angry father, "I have the strangest confession to make to you, the most ignominious for a man of honor. And the worst punishment of my conduct, which perhaps was natural, is not this revelation to you—I dread the daughter even more than the father."

Ernest then told the prologue of this domestic drama, quite simply, and with the dignity of sincerity; he did not omit the twenty and odd letters they had exchanged—he had brought them with him—nor the interview he had just had with Canalis. When the father had read all these letters, the poor lover, pale and suppliant, quaked before the fiery looks of the Provençal.

"Well, monsieur," said Mignon, "in all this there is only one mistake, but it is all-important. My daughter has not six millions of francs; her fortune at most is two hundred thousand francs in settlement, and very doubtful expectations."

"Oh, monsieur!" cried Ernest, throwing his arms round Charles Mignon, and hugging him, "you relieve me of a load that oppressed me. Now, perhaps, nothing will come in the way of my happiness!—I have interest; I shall soon be Master of the Exchequer. If she had but ten thousand francs, if I had to accept nominal settlements, Mademoiselle Mignon would still be the wife of my choice; and to make her happy, as happy as you have made yours, to be a true son to you—yes, monsieur, for my father is dead—this is the deepest wish of my heart."

Charles Mignon drew back three steps, and fixed on la Brière a look that sank into the young man's eyes, as a poniard goes into its sheath; then he stood silent, reading in

those fascinated eyes and on that eager countenance the most perfect candor and the purest truthfulness.

"Is fate at last wearied out?" said he to himself in an undertone. "Can I have found a paragon son-in-law in this youth?" He walked up and down the room in great excitement.

"Well, monsieur," he said at length, "you owe implicit obedience to the sentence you have come to ask, for otherwise you would at this moment be acting a mere farce."

"Indeed, monsieur——"

"Listen to me," said the father, nailing la Brière to the spot by a look. "I will be neither severe, nor hard, nor unjust. You must take the disadvantages with the advantages of the false position in which you have placed yourself. My daughter imagines that she is in love with one of the great poets of our day, whose fame chiefly has fascinated her. Well, then, ought not I, as her father, to enable her to choose between the celebrity which has seemed a lighthouse to her, and the humble reality thrown to her by chance in the irony it so often allows itself? Must she not be free to choose between you and Canalis? I trust to your honor to be silent as to what I have just told you concerning the state of my affairs. You and your friend, the Baron de Canalis, must come to spend the last fortnight of this month of October at le Havre. My house will be open to you both; my daughter will have the opportunity of knowing you. Remember, you yourself are to bring your rival, and to allow him to believe all the fables that may be current as to the Comte de la Bastie's millions. I shall be at le Havre by to-morrow, and shall expect you three days later. Good-morning, monsieur."

Poor la Brière very slowly made his way back to Canalis. At that moment the poet, face to face with himself, could give himself up to the torrent of reflections that flow from that "second thought" which Talleyrand so highly praised. The first thought is the impulse of nature, the second that of society.

"A girl with six millions of francs! And my eyes failed to

discern the glitter of that gold through the darkness! With such a fortune as that, I can be a peer of France, count, ambassador!—I have answered the most ordinary women, simpletons, intriguing girls who only wanted an autograph! And I rebelled against these *bal masqué* wiles on the very day when heaven sent me a chosen soul, an angel with wings of gold!—Pooh! I will write a sublime poem, and the chance will come again! What luck for that little la Brière, who spread his tail in my sunbeams!—And what plagiary. I am the model, and he is to be the statue! This is playing the fable of 'Bertrand and Raton.'—Six millions, and an angel, a Mignon de la Bastie! An aristocratic angel, who loves poetry and the poet!—And I meanwhile display my muscles as a strong man, perform athletics, like Alcides, to astonish this champion of physical strength by moral force—this brave soldier full of fine feeling, this young girl's friend, who will tell her I have a soul of iron. I am playing Napoleon, when I ought to show myself as a seraph!—I shall have won a friend perhaps, and have paid dear for him; but friendship is a fine thing. Six millions—that is the price of a friend; a man cannot have many at that figure!"

At this last point of exclamation la Brière came into his friend's room; he was depressed.

"Well, what is the matter?" said Canalis.

"The father insists that his daughter shall be enabled to choose between the two Canalis——"

"Poor boy!" said the poet, laughing. "A clever man is that father!"

"I have pledged my honor to take you to le Havre," said la Brière dolefully.

"My dear boy," said Canalis, "if your honor is at stake, you may depend upon me. I will ask for a month's leave of absence."

"Oh, Modeste is lovely!" cried la Brière in despair, "and you will easily extinguish me! Still, I was amazed to find good fortune coming my way; I said to myself, it is all a mistake!"

"Pooh! We shall see," said Canalis with ruthless cheerfulness.

That evening, after dinner, Charles Mignon and his cashier were flying, at the cost of three francs a stage to the postilion, from Paris to le Havre. The father had completely allayed his watch-dog's alarms as to Modeste's love affairs, had released him from his responsibilities, and reassured him as to Butscha's proceedings.

"Everything is for the best, my good old friend," said Charles, who had made inquiries of Mongenod as to Canalis and la Brière. "We have two players for one part," he added, laughing.

At the same time, he enjoined absolute silence on his old comrade as to the comedy about to be played at the Chalet, and his gentle revenge, or, if you will, the lesson to be given by a father to his child. From Paris to le Havre was one long dialogue between the friends, by which the Colonel learned the smallest events that had happened in his family during the past four years; and Charles told Dumay that Desplein, the great surgeon, was to come before the end of the month to examine the Countess' eyes, and decide whether it would be possible to remove the cataract and restore her sight.

A few minutes before the breakfast hour at the Chalet, the cracking of a whip, by a postilion counting on a large gratuity, announced the return of the two soldiers. Only the joy of a father coming home to his family after a long absence would give rise to such a detonation, and all the women were standing at the little gate.

There are so many fathers, and so many children—more fathers perhaps than children—who can enter into the excitement of such a meeting, that literature is never required to depict it; happily! for the finest words, and poetry itself, are inadequate to such emotions. Perhaps, indeed, the sweeter emotions have no literary side.

Not a word was spoken that day that could disturb the happiness of the Mignon family. There was a truce between

the father, the mother, and the daughter as to the mysterious love affair which had paled Modeste's cheek. She was up to-day for the first time. The Colonel, with the delicate tenderness that characterizes a true soldier, sat all the time by his wife's side, her hand constantly held in his, and he watched Modeste, never tired of admiring her refined, elegant, and poetic beauty. Is it not by such small things that we know a man of true feeling?

Modeste, fearful of troubling the melancholy happiness of her father and mother, came from time to time to kiss the traveler's brow, and by kissing him so often, seemed to wish to kiss him for two.

"Ah, darling child! I understand you," said her father, pressing Modeste's hand at a moment when she was smothering him with affection.

"Hush!" said Modeste in his ear, pointing to her mother.

Dumay's rather perfidious silence left Modeste very uneasy as to the results of his journey to Paris; she now and then stole a look at the Lieutenant, but could not penetrate that tough skin. The Colonel, as a prudent father, wished to study his only daughter's nature, and, above all, to consult his wife, before proceeding to a discussion on which the happiness of the whole family would depend.

"To-morrow, my dearest child, rise early," said he at night, "and if it is fine, we will go for a walk together on the seashore. We have to talk over your poems, Mademoiselle de la Bastie."

These words, spoken with a smile that was reflected on Dumay's lips, were all Modeste could know; still, this was enough to allay her anxiety and to make her too curious to get to sleep till late, so busy was her fancy.

Next morning Modeste was dressed and ready before the Colonel.

"You know everything, my dear father," said she, as soon as they had started on their way to the sea.

"I know everything—and a good many things that you do not know," replied he.

Thereupon the father and daughter walked some few steps in silence.

"Now tell me, my child, how a daughter so worshiped by her mother could take so decisive a step as to write to a man unknown to her without asking that mother's advice?"

"Well, papa, because mamma would not have allowed it."

"And do you think, my child, that it was right? Though you have inevitably been left to bring yourself up, how is it that your reason or your insight—if modesty failed you—did not tell you that to act in such a way was to throw yourself at a man's head? Can it be that my daughter, my only child, lacks pride and delicacy? Oh! Modeste, you gave your father two hours of hell's torments in Paris; for, in point of fact, your conduct, morally, has been the same as Bettina's, without having the excuse of seduction; you have been a coquette in cold blood, and that is love without heart, the worst vice of the French woman."

"I—without pride?" said Modeste in tears. "But he has never seen me!"

"*He* knows your name."

"I never let him know it till the moment when our eyes had set the seal to three months of correspondence, during which our souls had spoken to each other!"

"Yes, my dear mistaken angel, you have brought a kind of reason to bear on this madness which has compromised your happiness and your family."

"Well, after all, papa, happiness is the justification of such boldness," said she, with a touch of temper.

"Ah! Then it is merely boldness?" cried her father.

"Such boldness as my mother allowed herself," she answered hastily.

"Refractory child! Your mother, after meeting me at a ball, told her father,who adored her, that same evening that she believed she could be happy with me.—Now, be candid, Modeste; is there any resemblance between love, at first sight

it is true, but under a father's eye, and the mad act of writing to an unknown man?"

"An unknown man? Nay, papa, one of our greatest poets, whose character and life are under the light of day, exposed to gossip and calumny; a man clothed in glory, to whom, my dear father, I was but a dramatic, literary personage—a girl of Shakespeare's—till the moment when I felt I must know whether the man were as attractive as his soul is beautiful."

"Bless me, my poor child, you are dreaming of poetry in connection with marriage. But if, in all ages, girls have been cloistered in the family; if God and social law have placed them under the stern yoke of paternal sanction, it is precisely and on purpose to spare them the misfortunes to which the poetry that fascinates you must lead while it dazzles you, and which you therefore cannot estimate at its true worth. Poetry is one of the graces of life; it is not the whole of life."

"Papa, it is an action for ever undecided before the tribunal of facts, for there is a constant struggle between our hearts and the family authority."

"Woe to the girl who should find happiness by means of such resistance!" said the Colonel gravely. "In 1813 one of my fellow-officers, the Marquis d'Aiglemont, married his cousin against her father's warnings, and the household paid dearly for the obstinacy that a girl could mistake for love. —In these matters the family is supreme."

"My *fiancé* has told me all that," said she. "He assumed the part of *Orgon* for some time, and had the courage to run down the personal character of poets."

"I have read the correspondence," said her father, with a meaning smile that made Modeste uneasy. "And I may, on that point, remark that your last letter would hardly be allowable in a girl who had been seduced—in a Julie d'Étanges. Good God! what mischief comes of romances!"

"If they were never written, my dear father, we should still enact them. It is better to read them. There are fewer romantic adventures now than in the time of Louis XIV. and Louis XV., when fewer novels were published.—Besides,

if you have read our letters, you must have perceived that I have found you for a son-in-law the most respectful son, the most angelic nature, the strictest honesty, and that we love each other at least as much as you and mamma did. . . . Well, I will admit that the affair has not been conducted exactly as etiquette requires. I made a mistake, if you like——"

"I have read your letters," repeated her father, interrupting her, "so I know how he justified you in your own eyes for a step which might perhaps be excusable in a woman who knows life, who is carried away by passion, but which in a girl of twenty is a monstrous fault——"

"A fault in common people's eyes, in those of narrow-minded Gobenheims, who measure out life with a T square! But do not let us go beyond the artistic and poetic world, papa. —We young girls live between two alternatives: we may show a man that we love him by mincing graces, or we may go to meet him frankly. And is not this last method really great and noble? We French girls are disposed of by our family like merchandise, at three months' date, sometimes much sooner, like Mademoiselle Vilquin; but in England, Switzerland, and Germany they are married more nearly on the system I have adopted. What can you say to that? Am I not half German?"

"Child," exclaimed the Colonel, looking at his daughter, "the superiority of France lies precisely in the common sense, the strict logic to which our splendid language compels the mind. France is the Reason of the world! England and Germany are romantic in this point; but even there the great families follow their customs.—You girls would rather not believe, then, that your parents, who know life, have the charge of your souls and your happiness, and that it is their duty to steer you clear of the rocks! . . . Good God!" he went on, "is this their fault or ours? Ought we to bend our children under a yoke of iron? Must we always be punished for the tenderness which prompts us to make them happy, which, unfortunately, makes them heart of our heart!"

As she heard this ejaculation, spoken almost with tears, Modeste cast a side glance at her father.

"Is it wrong in a girl whose heart is free," said she, "to choose for her husband a man who is not only charming in himself, but who is also a man of genius, of good birth, and in a fine position—a gentleman as gentle as myself?"

"Then you love him?" said the Colonel.

"I tell you, father," said she, laying her head on his breast, "if you do not want to see me die——"

"That is enough," said the Colonel; "your passion is, I see, unchangeable."

"Unchangeable."

"Nothing could move you?"

"Nothing in the world."

"You can conceive of no alteration, no betrayal," her father went on. "You love him for better, for worse, for the sake of his personal charm; and if he should be a d'Estourny, you still would love him?"

"Oh, papa, you do not know your child! Could I love a coward, a man devoid of truth and honor—a gallows-bird!"

"Then supposing you have been deceived?"

"By that charming young fellow, so candid—almost melancholy?—You are laughing at me, or you have not seen him."

"I see; happily your love is not so imperative as you say. I have suggested conditions which might modify your poem.—Well, then, you will admit that fathers are of some use?"

"You wanted to give me a lesson, papa—a sort of object-lesson, it would seem."

"Poor misled girl!" said her father severely; "the lesson is not of my giving; I have nothing to do with it beyond trying to soften the blow."

"Say no more, papa; do not trifle with my very life," said Modeste, turning pale.

"Nay, my child, summon up your courage. It is you who have trifled with life, and life now laughs you to scorn."

Modeste looked at her father in bewilderment.

"Listen; if the young man you love, whom you saw in

church at le Havre four days ago, were a contemptible wretch ——"

"It is not true!" said she. "That pale, dark face, so noble and full of poetry——"

"Is a lie!" said the Colonel, interrupting her. "He is no more Monsieur de Canalis than I am that fisherman hauling up his sail to go out——"

"Do you know what you are killing in me?" said Modeste.

"Be comforted, my child; though fate has made your fault its own punishment, the mischief is not irreparable. The youth you saw, with whom you have exchanged hearts by correspondence, is an honest fellow; he came to me to confess his dilemma. He loves you, and I should not object to him as a son-in-law."

"And if he is not Canalis, who is he?" asked Modeste, in a broken voice.

"His secretary. His name is Ernest de la Brière. He is not of superior birth, but he is one of those average men, with solid virtues and sound morals, whom parents like. And what does it matter to us, after all? You have seen him; nothing can change your feelings; you have chosen him, you know his soul—it is as noble as he is good-looking."

The Comte de la Bastie was checked by a sigh from Modeste. The poor child, perfectly white, her eyes fixed on the sea, and as rigid as the dead, had been struck as by a pistol-shot by the words, *"One of those average men, with solid virtues and sound morals, whom parents like."*

"Deceived!" she said at last.

"As your poor sister was, but less seriously."

"Let us go home, papa," she said, rising from the knoll on which they had been sitting. "Listen, father; I swear before God to obey your wishes, whatever they may be, in the business of marriage."

"Then you have already ceased to love?" asked her father sarcastically.

"I loved a true man without a falsehood on his face, as honest as you yourself, incapable of disguising himself like an actor, of dressing himself up in another man's glory."

"You said that nothing could move you!" said the Colonel ironically.

"Oh, do not make game of me!" cried she, clasping her hands, and looking at her father in an agony of entreaty. "You do not know how you are torturing my heart and my dearest beliefs by your satire——"

"God forbid! I have said the exact truth."

"You are very good, father," she replied, after a pause, with a certain solemnity.

"And he has your letters! Heh?" said Charles Mignon. "If those crazy effusions of your soul had fallen into the hands of one of those poets who, according to Dumay, use them for pipe-lights——"

"Oh, that is going too far."

"So Canalis told him."

"He saw Canalis?"

"Yes," replied the Colonel.

They walked on a little way in silence.

"That, then," said Modeste, when they had gone a few steps, "was why that gentleman spoke so ill of poets and poetry. Why did that little secretary talk of—— But, however," she added, interrupting herself, "were not his virtues, his qualities, his fine sentiments, a mere epistolary make-up? The man who steals another's fame and name may very well——"

"Pick locks, rob the Treasury, murder on the highway," said Charles Mignon, smiling. "That is just like you—you girls, with your uncompromising feelings and your ignorance of life. A man who can deceive a woman has either escaped the scaffold or must end there."

This raillery checked Modeste's effervescence, and again they were both silent.

"My child," the Colonel added, "men in the world—as in nature, for that matter—are bound to try to win your hearts, and you defend them. You have reversed the position. Is that well? In a false position everything is false. Yours, then, was the first wrong step.—No, a man is not a monster because

he tries to attract a woman; our rights allow us to be the aggressors, with all the consequences, short of crime and baseness. A man may still have virtues even after throwing over a woman, for this simply means that he has failed to find the treasure he sought in her; while no woman but a queen, an actress, or a woman so far above the man in rank that to him she is like a queen, can take the initiative without incurring much blame.—But a girl! She is false to everything that God has given her, every flower of saintliness, dignity, and sweetness, whatever grace, poetry, or precaution she may infuse into the act."

"To seek the master and find the servant! To play the old farce of Love and Chance on one side only!" she exclaimed, with bitter feeling. "Oh, I shall never hold up my head again!"

"Foolish child! Monsieur Ernest de la Brière is, in my eyes, at least the equal of Monsieur de Canalis; he has been private secretary to a Prime Minister, he is Referendary to the Court of Exchequer, he is a man of heart, he adores you, —but he does not write verses.—No, I confess it, he is not a poet; but he may have a heart full of poetry. However, my poor child," he added, in reply to Modeste's face of disgust, "you will see them both—the false and the real Canalis——"

"Oh, papa!"

"Did you not swear to obey me in everything that concerns the *business* of your marriage? Well, you may choose between them the man you prefer for your husband. You began with a poem, you may end with a page of bucolics by trying to detect the true nature of these gentlemen in some rustic excursions, a shooting or a fishing party."

Modeste bent her head and returned to the Chalet with her father, listening to what he said, and answering in monosyllables. She had fallen humiliated into the depths of a bog, from the Alp where she fancied she had flown up to an eagle's nest. To adopt the poetical phraseology of an author of that period, "After feeling the soles of her feet too tender to tread on the glass sherds of reality, Fancy, which had

united every characteristic of woman in that fragile form, from the day-dreams of a modest girl, all strewn with violets, to the unbridled desires of a courtesan, has now led her to the midst of her enchanted gardens, where, hideous surprise! instead of an exquisite blossom, she found growing from the soil the hairy and twisted limbs of the Mandragora."

From the mystic heights of her love, Modeste had dropped on to the dull, flat road, lying between ditches and ploughed lands—the road, in short, that is paved with vulgarity. What girl with an ardent spirit but would be broken by such a fall? At whose feet had she cast her promises?

The Modeste who returned to the Chalet bore no more resemblance to the girl who had gone out two hours before, than the actress in the street resembles the heroine on the stage. She sank into a state of apathy that was painful to behold. The sun was darkened, nature was under a shroud, the flowers had no message for her. Like every girl of a vehement disposition, she drank a little too deep of the cup of disenchantment. She rebelled against reality, without choosing as yet to bend her neck to the yoke of the family and of society; she thought it too heavy, too hard, too oppressive. She would not even listen to the comfort offered by her father and mother, and felt an indescribable savage delight in abandoning herself to her mental sufferings.

"Then poor Butscha was right!" she exclaimed one evening.

This speech shows how far she had traveled in so short a time on the barren plains of Reality, guided by her deep dejection. Grief, when it comes of the upheaval of all our hopes, is an illness; it often ends in death. It would be no mean occupation for modern physiology to investigate the process and means by which a thought can produce the same deadly effects as a poison; how despair can destroy the appetite, injure the pylorus, and change all the functions of the strongest vitality. This was the case with Modeste. In three days she presented an image of morbid melancholy; she sang no more, it was impossible to make her smile; her parents

and friends were alarmed. Charles Mignon, uneasy at seeing nothing of the two young men, was thinking of going to fetch them; but on the fourth day Monsieur Latournelle had news of them, and this was how.

Canalis, immensely tempted by such a rich marriage, would neglect no means of outdoing la Brière, while Ernest could not complain of his having violated the laws of friendship. The poet thought that nothing put a lover at a greater disadvantage in a young lady's eyes than figuring in an inferior position; so he proposed, in the most innocent manner possible, that he and la Brière should keep house together, taking a little country place at Ingouville, where they might live for a month under pretext of recruiting their health.

As soon as la Brière had consented to this proposal, at first regarding it as very natural, Canalis insisted on his being his guest, and made all the arrangements himself. He sent his man-servant to le Havre, desiring him to apply to Monsieur Latournelle for the choice of a country cottage at Ingouville, thinking that the notary would certainly talk over the matter with the Mignon family. Ernest and Canalis, it may be supposed, had discussed every detail of their adventure; and la Brière, always prolix, had given his rival a thousand valuable hints.

The servant, understanding his master's intentions, carried them out to admiration; he trumpeted the advent of the great poet, to whom his doctors had ordered some sea-baths to recruit him after the double fatigues of politics and literature. This grand personage required a house of at least so many rooms; for he was bringing his secretary, his cook, two men-servants, and a coachman, not to mention Monsieur Germain Bonnet, his body-servant. The traveling carriage the poet selected and hired for a month was very neat, and could serve for making some excursions; and Germain was in search of two saddle-horses for hire in the neighborhood, as Monsieur le Baron and his secretary were fond of horse-exercise. In the presence of little Latournelle, Germain, as he went over various houses, spoke much of the secretary, and

rejected two villas on the ground that Monsieur de la Brière would not be well accommodated.

"Monsieur le Baron," said he, "regards his secretary as his best friend. Oh, I should catch it handsomely if Monsieur de la Brière were not as well served as Monsieur le Baron himself. And, after all, Monsieur de la Brière is Referendary to the Court of Exchequer."

Germain was never seen dressed otherwise than in a suit of black, with good gloves and boots, turned out like a gentleman. Imagine the effect he produced, and the notion that was formed of the great poet from this specimen. A clever man's servant becomes clever too; the master's cleverness presently "runs" and colors the man. Germain did not overact his part; he was straightforward and genial, as Canalis had instructed him to be. Poor la Brière had no suspicion of the injury Germain was doing him, or of the depreciation to which he had exposed himself; for some echoes of public report rose from the lower depths to Modeste's ears. Thus Canalis was bringing his friend in his retinue, in his carriage; and Ernest's simple nature did not allow him to perceive his false position soon enough to remedy it.

The delay which so provoked Charles Mignon was caused by the poet's desire to have his arms painted on the doors of the chaise, and by his orders to the tailor; for Canalis took in the wide world of such trivialities, of which the least may influence a girl.

"Make yourself easy," said Latournelle to the Colonel on the fifth day. "Monsieur de Canalis' man came to a determination this morning. He has taken Madame Amaury's cottage at Sanvic, furnished, for seven hundred francs, and has written to his master that he can start, and will find everything ready on his arrival. So the gentlemen will be here by Sunday. I have also had this note from Butscha. Here —it is not long: 'My dear Master, I cannot get back before Sunday. Between this and then I must get some important information which nearly concerns some one in whom you are interested.' "

The announcement of this arrival did not make Modeste at all less sad; the sense of a fall, of humiliation, still held sway over her, and she was not such a born coquette as her father thought her. There is a charming and permissible kind of flirtation, the coquetry of the soul, which might be called the good breeding of love; and Charles Mignon, when reproving his daughter, had failed to distinguish between the desire to please and the factitious love of the mind, between the craving to love and self-interest. Just like a soldier of the Empire, he saw in the letters he had so hastily read a girl throwing herself at a poet's head; but in many letters—omitted here for the sake of brevity—a connoisseur would have admired the maidenly and graceful reserve which Modeste had immediately substituted for the aggressive and frivolous pertness of her first effusions—a transition very natural in a woman.

On one point her father had been cruelly right. It was her last letter—in which Modeste, carried away by threefold love, had spoken as though their marriage were a decided thing, which really brought her to shame. Still, she thought her father very hard, very cruel, to compel her to receive a man so unworthy of her, towards whom her soul had flown almost unveiled. She had questioned Dumay as to his interview with the poet; she had ingeniously extracted from him every detail, and she could not think Canalis such a barbarian as the lieutenant thought him. She could smile at the fine papal chest containing the letters of the *mille et trois* ladies of this literary Don Giovanni. Again and again she was on the point of saying to her father, "I am not the only girl who writes to him; the cream of womankind send leaves for the poet's crown of bay."

In the course of this week Modeste's character underwent a transformation. This catastrophe—and it was a great one to so poetical a nature—aroused her latent acumen and spirit of mischief, and her suitors were to find her a formidable adversary. For, in fact, in any girl, if her heart is chilled, her head grows clear; she then observes everything with a

certain swiftness of judgment and a spirit of mockery, such as Shakespeare has admirably painted in the person of Beatrice in *Much Ado about Nothing*. Modeste was seized by intense disgust of mankind, since the most distinguished of them had deceived her hopes. In love, what a woman mistakes for disgust is simply seeing clearly; but in matters of feeling no woman, especially no young girl, ever sees truly. When she ceases to admire, she contemns. So Modeste, after going through fearful tortures of mind, inevitably put on the armor on which, as she declared, she had stamped the word Contempt; thenceforward she could look on as a disinterested spectator at what she called the Farce of Suitors, although she filled the part of leading lady. More especially was she bent on pertinaciously humiliating Monsieur de la Brière.

"Modeste is saved," said Madame Mignon to her husband with a smile. "She means to be revenged on the false Canalis by trying to fall in love with the true one."

This was, indeed, Modeste's plan. It was so obvious that her mother, to whom she confided her vexation, advised her to treat Monsieur de la Brière with oppressive civility.

"These two young fellows," said Madame Latournelle on the Saturday, "have no suspicion of the troop of spies at their heels, for here are eight of us to keep an eye on them."

"What, my dear—two?" cried little Latournelle; "there are three of them!—Gobenheim is not here yet, so I may speak."

Modeste had looked up, and all the others, following her example, gazed at the notary.

"A third lover, and he is a lover, has put himself on the list——"

"Bless me!" said Charles Mignon.

"But he is no less a person," the notary went on pompously, "than His Lordship Monsieur le Duc d'Hérouville, Marquis de Saint-Séver, Duc de Nivron, Comte de Bayeux, Vicomte d'Essigny, High Equerry of France, and Peer of the Realm, Knight of the Orders of the Spur and of the Golden Fleece, Grandee of Spain, and son of the last Governor of Normandy.

—He saw Mademoiselle Modeste when he was staying with the Vilquins, and he then only regretted—as his notary told me, who arrived yesterday from Bayeux—that she was not rich enough for him, since his father, on his return from exile, had found nothing left but his Château of Hérouville, graced by his sister's presence.—The young Duke is three-and-thirty. I am definitively charged to make overtures, Monsieur le Comte," added Latournelle, turning respectfully to the Colonel.

"Ask Modeste," said her father, "whether she wishes to have another bird in her aviary; for, so far as I am concerned, I am quite willing that this fine gentleman equerry should pay his addresses to her."

Notwithstanding the care with which Charles Mignon avoided seeing anybody, stayed in the Chalet, and never went out but with Modeste, Gobenheim, whom they could hardly cease to receive at the Chalet, had gossiped about Dumay's wealth; for Dumay, a second father to Modeste, had said to Gobenheim when he left his service, "I shall be my Colonel's steward, and all my money, excepting what my wife may keep, will go to my little Modeste's children."

So every one at le Havre had echoed the plain question that Latournelle had asked himself:

"Must not Monsieur Charles Mignon have made an enormous fortune if Dumay's share amounts to six hundred thousand francs, and if Dumay is to be his steward?"

"Monsieur Mignon came home in a ship of his own," said the gossips on 'Change, "loaded with indigo. The freight alone, not to mention the vessel, is worth more than he gives out to be his fortune."

The Colonel would not discharge the servants he had so carefully chosen during his travels, so he was obliged to hire a house for six months in the lower part of Ingouville; he had a body-servant, a cook, and a coachman—both negroes—and a mulatto woman and two mulatto men on whose faithfulness he could rely. The coachman was inquiring for riding horses for mademoiselle and his master, and for carriage

horses for the chaise in which the Colonel and the Lieutenant had come home. This traveling carriage, purchased in Paris, was in the latest fashion, and bore the arms of la Bastie with a Count's coronet. All these things, mere trifles in the eyes of a man who had been living, for four years, in the midst of the unbounded luxury of the Indies, of the Hong merchants, and the English at Canton, were the subject of comment to the traders of le Havre and the good folks of Graville and Ingouville. Within five days there was a hubbub of talk which flashed across Normandy like a fired train of gunpowder.

"Monsieur Mignon has come home from China with millions," was said at Rouen, "and it would seem that he has become a Count in the course of his travels."

"But he was Comte de la Bastie before the Revolution," somebody remarked.

"So a Liberal, who for five-and-twenty years was known as Charles Mignon, is now called Monsieur le Comte! What are we coming to?"

Thus, in spite of the reserve of her parents and intimates, Modeste was regarded as the richest heiress in Normandy, and all eyes could now see her merits. The Duc d'Hérouville's aunt and sister, in full drawing-room assembly at Bayeux, confirmed Monsieur Charles Mignon's right to the arms and title of Count conferred on Cardinal Mignon, whose Cardinal's hat and cords were, out of gratitude, assumed in place of a crest and supporters. These ladies had caught sight of Mademoiselle de la Bastie from the Vilquins', and their solicitude for the impoverished head of the house at once scented an opportunity.

"If Mademoiselle de la Bastie is as rich as she is handsome," said the young Duke's aunt, "she will be the best match in the province. And she, at any rate, is of noble birth!"

The last words were a shot at the Vilquins, with whom they could not come to terms after enduring the humiliation of paying them a visit.

Such were the little events which led to the introduction of

another actor in this domestic drama, contrary to all the laws of Aristotle and Horace. But the portrait and biography of this personage, so tardy in his appearance, will not detain us long, since he is of the smallest importance. Monsieur le Duc will not fill more space here than he will in history.

His Lordship Monsieur le Duc d'Hérouville, the fruit of the matrimonial autumn of the last Governor of Normandy, was born at Vienna in 1796, during the emigration. The old Marshal, who returned with the King in 1814, died in 1819 without seeing his son married, though he was Duc de Nivron; he had nothing to leave him but the immense Château of Hérouville, with the park, some outlying ground and a farm, all painfully repurchased, and worth about fifteen thousand francs a year. Louis XVIII. gave the young Duke the post of Master of the Horse; and under Charles X. he received the allowance of twelve thousand francs a year granted to impecunious peers.

But what were twenty-seven thousand francs a year for such a family? In Paris, indeed, the young Duke had the use of the Royal carriages, and his official residence at the King's stables in the Rue Saint-Thomas du Louvre; his salary paid the expenses of the winter, and the twenty-seven thousand francs paid those of the summer in Normandy.

Though this great man was still a bachelor, the fault was less his own than that of his aunt, who was not familiar with La Fontaine's fables. Mademoiselle d'Hérouville's pretensions were stupendous, quite out of harmony with the spirit of the age; for great names without money can hardly meet with any wealthy heiresses among the high French nobility, which finds it difficult enough to enrich its sons, ruined by the equal division of property. To find an advantageous match for the young Duc d'Hérouville she should have cultivated the great financial houses, and this haughty daughter of the noble house offended them all by her cutting speeches. During the early years of the Restoration, between 1817 and 1825, while looking out for millions, Mademoiselle d'Hérouville refused Mademoiselle Mongenod, the banker's daughter,

with whom Monsieur de Fontaine was content. And now, after various good matches had been marred by her pride, she had just decided that the fortune of the Nucingens had been amassed by too vile means to allow of her lending herself to Madame de Nucingen's ambitious desire to see her daughter a duchess. The King, anxious to restore the splendor of the Hérouvilles, had almost made the match himself, and he publicly taxed Mademoiselle d'Hérouville with folly. Thus the aunt made her nephew ridiculous, and the Duke laid himself open to ridicule.

It is a fact that when the great things of humanity vanish they leave some fragments (*frusteaux,* Rabelais would call them); and the French nobility in our day shows too many fag-ends. In this long study of manners neither the clergy nor the nobility have anything to complain of. Those two great and magnificent social necessaries are well represented; but would it not be false to the proud title of Historian to be other than impartial, to fail to show here the degeneracy of the race—just as you will elsewhere find the study of an émigré, the Comte de Mortsauf (*le Lys dans la Vallée*), and every noblest feature of the noble, in the Marquis d'Espard (*l'Interdiction*).

How was it that a race of brave and strong men, that the house of d'Hérouville, which gave the famous Marshal to the Royal cause, cardinals to the Church, captains to the Valois, and brave men to Louis XIV., ended in a frail creature smaller than Butscha? It is a question we may ask ourselves in many a Paris drawing-room, as we hear one of the great names of France announced, and see a little slender slip of a man come in who seems only to breathe, or a prematurely old fellow, or some eccentric being, in whom the observer seeks, but scarcely finds, a feature in which imagination can see a trace of original greatness. The dissipations of the reign of Louis XV., the orgies of that selfish time, have produced the etiolated generation in which fine manners are the sole survivors of extinct great qualities. Style is the only inheritance preserved by the nobility. Thus, apart from cer-

tain exceptions, the defection which left Louis XVI. to perish may be to some extent explained by the miserable heritage of the reign of Madame de Pompadour.

The Master of the Horse, a young man with blue eyes, fair, pale, and slight, had a certain dignity of mind; but his small size, and his aunt's mistake in having led him to be uselessly civil to the Vilquins, made him excessively shy. The d'Hérouvilles had had a narrow escape of dying out in the person of a cripple (*l'Enfant maudit*). But the Grand Marshal—as the family always called the d'Hérouville whom Louis XIII. had created Duke—had married at the age of eighty-two, and, of course, the family had been continued. The young Duke liked women; but he placed them too high, he respected them too much, he adored them, and was not at his ease but with those whom no one respects. This character had led to his living a twofold life. He avenged himself on women of easy life for the worship he paid in the drawing-rooms, or, if you like, the boudoirs, of Saint-Germain. His ways and his tiny figure, his weary face, his blue eyes, with their somewhat ecstatic expression, had added to the ridicule poured on him, most unjustly, for he was full of apprehensiveness and wit; but his wit had no sparkle, and was never seen excepting when he was quite at his ease. Fanny Beaupré, the actress, who was supposed to be his highly paid and most intimate friend, used to say of him, "It is good wine, but so tightly corked up that you break your corkscrews."

The handsome Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, whom the Master of the Horse could only adore, crushed him by a speech which, unluckily, was repeated, as all clever but ill-natured speeches are.

"He reminds me," said she, "of a trinket, beautifully wrought, but which we show more than we use, and always keep in cotton wool."

Even his title of Master of the Horse would, by force of contrast, make good King Charles X. laugh, though the Duc d'Hérouville was a capital horseman. Men, like books, are sometimes valued too late. Modeste had had a glimpse of the

Duke during his fruitless visit to the Vilquins, and as he went by, all these remarks involuntarily recurred to her mind; but in the position in which she now stood, she perceived how valuable the Duc d'Hérouville's suit would be to save her from being at the mercy of a Canalis.

"I do not see," said she to Latournelle, "why the Duc d'Hérouville should not be allowed to call. In spite of our indigence," she added, with a mischievous glance at her father, "I am supposed to be an heiress. I shall have at last to publish a card of the field.—Have you not noticed how Gobenheim's looks have changed in the course of this week? He is in despair because he cannot set down his faithful attendance for whist to the score of mute admiration of me!"

"Hush, my darling! here he is," said Madame Latournelle.

"Old Althor is in despair," said Gobenheim to Monsieur Mignon as he came in.

"What about?" asked the Comte de la Bastie.

"Vilquin is going to fail, they say, and on 'Change here you are said to have several millions——"

"No one knows," said Charles Mignon very drily, "what my obligations in India may amount to, and I do not care to admit the public to my confidence in business matters.—Dumay," he added in his friend's ear, "if Vilquin is in difficulties, we may be able to get the place back for what he gave for it in ready money."

Such was the state of affairs brought about by chance when, on Sunday morning, Canalis and la Brière, preceded by a courier, arrived at Madame Amaury's villa. They were told that the Duc d'Hérouville and his sister had arrived on the previous Tuesday at a hired house in Graville, for the benefit of their health. This competition led to a jest in the town that rents would rise at Ingouville.

"She will make the place a perfect hospital if this goes on!" remarked Mademoiselle Vilquin, disgusted at not becoming a duchess.

The perennial comedy of *The Heiress,* now to be performed at the Chalet, might certainly, from the frame of mind in

which it found Modeste, have been, as she had said in jest, a competition, for she was firmly resolved, after the overthrow of her illusions, to give her hand only to the man whose character should prove perfectly satisfactory.

On the morrow of their arrival, the rivals—still bosom friends—prepared to make their first visit to the Chalet that evening. They devoted the whole of Sunday and all Monday morning to unpacking, to taking possession of Madame Amaury's house, and to settling themselves in it for a month. Besides, the poet, justified by his position as Minister's apprentice in allowing himself some craft, had thought of everything; he wished to get the benefit of the excitement that might be caused by his arrival, of which some echoes might reach the Chalet. Canalis, supposed to be much fatigued, did not go out; la Brière went twice to walk past the Chalet, for he loved with a sort of desperation, he had the greatest dread of having repelled Modeste, his future seemed wrapped in thick clouds.

The two friends came down to dinner on that Monday in array for their first visit, the most important of all. La Brière was dressed as he had been in church on that famous Sunday; but he regarded himself as the satellite to a planet, and trusted wholly to the chance of circumstances. Canalis, on his part, had not forgotten his black coat, nor his orders, nor the drawing-room grace perfected by his intimacy with the Duchesse de Chaulieu, his patroness, and with the finest company of the Faubourg Saint-Germain. Canalis had attended to every detail of dandyism, while poor Ernest was prepared to appear in the comparative carelessness of a hopeless man.

As he waited on the two gentlemen at table, Germain could not help smiling at the contrast. At the second course he came in with a diplomatic, or, to be exact, a disturbed air.

"Monsieur le Baron," said he to Canalis in a low voice, "did you know that Monsieur the Master of the Horse is coming to Graville to be cured of the same complaint as you and Monsieur de la Brière?"

"The little Duc d'Hérouville?" cried Canalis.

"Yes, sir."

"Can he have come for Mademoiselle de la Bastie?" asked la Brière, coloring.

"For Mademoiselle Mignon," replied Germain.

"We are done!" cried Canalis, looking at la Brière.

"Ah!" Ernest eagerly replied, "that is the first time you have said *we* since we left Paris. Till this moment you have said *I*."

"You know me!" cried Melchior with a burst of laughter. "Well, we are not in a position to hold our own against an officer of the Household, against the titles of Duke and Peer, nor against the marsh-lands which the Privy Council has just conferred, on the strength of my report, on the House of Hérouville."

"His Highness," said la Brière with mischievous gravity, "offers you a plum of consolation in the person of his sister."

Just at this moment the Comte de la Bastie was announced. The two young men rose to receive him, and la Brière hastened to meet him and introduce Canalis.

"I had to return the visit you paid me in Paris," said Charles Mignon to the young Referendary, "and I knew that by coming here I should have the added pleasure of seeing one of our great living poets."

"Great?—monsieur," the poet replied with a smile; "there can be nothing great henceforth in an age to which the reign of Napoleon was the preface. To begin with, we are a perfect tribe of so-called great poets. And besides, second-rate talent apes genius so well that it has made any great distinction impossible."

"And is that what has driven you into politics?" asked the Comte de la Bastie.

"It is the same in that field too," said Canalis. "There will be no more great statesmen; there will be only men who are more or less in touch with events. Under the system produced by the Charter, monsieur, which regards the schedule

of the rates you pay as a patent of nobility, there is nothing substantial but what you went to find in China—a fortune."

Melchior, well pleased with himself, and satisfied with the impression he was making on his future father-in-law, now turned to Germain.

"Give us coffee in the drawing-room," said he, bowing to the merchant to leave the dining-room.

"I must thank you, Monsieur le Comte," said la Brière, "for having spared me the embarrassment of not knowing how I might introduce my friend at your house. To your kind heart you add a happy wit——"

"Oh, such wit as is common to the natives of Provence," said Mignon.

"Ah, you come from Provence?" cried Canalis.

"Forgive my friend," said la Brière; "he has not studied the history of the la Basties as I have."

At the word friend, Canalis shot a deep look at Ernest.

"If your health permits," said the Provençal to the great poet, "I claim the honor of receiving you this evening under my roof. It will be a day to mark, as the ancients have it, *albo notanda lapillo*. Though we are somewhat shy of receiving so great a glory in so small a house, you will gratify my daughter's impatience, for her admiration has led her even to set your verses to music."

"You possess what is better than glory," said Canalis. "You have beauty in your home, if I may believe Ernest."

"Oh, she is a good girl, whom you will find quite provincial," said the father.

"Provincial as she is, she has a suitor in the Duc d'Hérouville," cried Canalis in a hard tone.

"Oh," said Monsieur Mignon, with the deceptive frankness of a southerner, "I leave my daughter free to choose. Dukes, princes, private gentlemen, they are all the same to me, even men of genius. I will pledge myself to nothing; the man my Modeste may prefer will be my son-in-law, or rather my son," and he looked at la Brière. "Madame de la Bastie is a German; she cannot tolerate French etiquette, and I allow

myself to be guided by my two women. I would always rather ride inside a carriage than on the box. We can discuss such serious matters in jest, for we have not yet seen the Duc d'Hérouville, and I do not believe in marriages arranged by proxy any more than in suitors forced on girls by their parents."

"That is a declaration equally disheartening and encouraging to two young men who seek in marriage the philosopher's stone of happiness," said Canalis.

"Do not you think it desirable, necessary, and indeed good policy, to stipulate for perfect liberty for the parents, the daughter, and the suitors?" said Charles Mignon.

Canalis, at a glance from la Brière, made no reply, and the conversation continued on indifferent subjects. After walking two or three times round the garden, the father withdrew, begging the two friends to pay their visit.

"That is our dismissal," cried Canalis. "You understood it as I did. After all, in his place I should not hesitate between the Master of the Horse and either of us, charming fellows as we may be."

"I do not think so," said la Brière. "I believe that the worthy officer came simply to gratify his own impatience to see you, and to declare his neutrality while opening his house to us. Modeste, bewitched by your fame, and misled as to my identity, finds herself between Poetry and hard Fact. It is my misfortune to be the hard Fact."

"Germain," said Canalis to the servant who came in to clear away the coffee, "order the carriage round. We will go out in half an hour, and take a drive before going to the Chalet."

The two young men were equally impatient to see Modeste, but la Brière dreaded the meeting, while Canalis looked forward to it with a confidence inspired by conceit. Ernest's impulsive advances to her father, and the flattery by which he had soothed the merchant's aristocratic pride while showing up the poet's awkwardness, made Canalis determine that he

would play a part. He resolved that he would display all his powers of attraction, but at the same time affect indifference, seem to disdain Modeste, and so goad the girl's vanity. A disciple of the beautiful Duchesse de Chaulieu, he here showed himself worthy of his reputation as a man who knew women well; though he did not really know them, since no man does who is the happy victim of an exclusive passion. While the luckless Ernest, sunk in a corner of the carriage, was crushed by the terrors of true love and the anticipated wrath, scorn, contempt—all the lightnings of an offended and disappointed girl—and kept gloomy silence, Canalis, not less silent, was preparing himself, like an actor studying an important part in a new play.

Neither of them certainly looked like a happy man.

For Canalis, indeed, the matter was serious. To him the mere fancy for marrying involved the breach of the serious friendship which had bound him for nearly ten years to the Duchesse de Chaulieu. Though he had screened his journey under the common excuse of overwork—in which no woman ever believes, even if it is true—his conscience troubled him somewhat; but to la Brière the word Conscience seemed so Jesuitical that he only shrugged his shoulders when the poet spoke of his scruples.

"Your conscience, my boy, seems to me to mean simply your fear of losing the gratifications of vanity, some solid advantages, and a pleasant habit in sacrificing Madame de Chaulieu's affection; for, if you are successful with Modeste, you will certainly have nothing to regret in the aftermath of a passion so constantly reaped during these eight years past. If you tell me that you are afraid of offending your protectress, should she learn the real reason of your visit here, I can easily believe you. To throw over the Duchess and fail at the Chalet is staking too much! And you mistake the distress of this alternative for remorse!"

"You know nothing about sentiment!" cried Canalis, nettled, as a man always is when he asks for a compliment and hears the truth.

"That is just what a bigamist would say to a dozen jurymen," said la Brière, laughing.

This epigram made a yet more disagreeable impression on Canalis; he thought la Brière much too clever and too free for a secretary.

The arrival of a handsome carriage, with a coachman in Canalis' livery, made all the greater sensation at the Chalet, because the two gentlemen were expected, and all the persons of this tale, excepting only the Duke and Butscha, were assembled there.

"Which is the poet?" asked Madame Latournelle of Dumay, as they stood in the window bay, where she had posted herself on hearing the carriage wheels.

"The one who marches like a drum-major," replied the cashier.

"Ah, hah!" said the lady, studying Melchior, who strutted like a man on whom the world has its eye.

Though rather severe, Dumay's judgment—a simple soul, if ever man was—had hit the mark. Canalis was, morally speaking, a sort of Narcissus; this was the fault of the great lady who flattered him immensely, and spoilt him as women older than their adorers always will flatter and spoil men. A woman past her first youth, who means to attach a man permanently, begins by glorifying his faults, so as to make all rivalry impossible; for her rival cannot at once be in the secret of that subtle flattery to which a man so easily becomes accustomed. Coxcombs are the product of this feminine industry, when they are not coxcombs by nature.

Hence Canalis, caught young by the beautiful Duchess, justified himself for his airs and graces by telling himself that they pleased a woman whose taste was law. Subtle as these shades of feeling are, it is not impossible to render them. Thus Melchior had a real talent for reading aloud, which had been much admired, and too flattering praise had led him into an exaggerated manner, which neither poet nor actor can set bounds to, and which made de Marsay say—always de Marsay—that he did not declaim, but brayed out his verses, so fully

would he mouth the vowels as he listened to himself. To use the slang of the stage, he pumped himself out, and made too long pauses. He would examine his audience with a knowing look, and give himself self-satisfied airs, with the aids to emphasis of "sawing the air" and "windmill action"—picturesque phrases, as the catchwords of Art always are. Canalis indeed had imitators, and was the head of a school in this style. This melodramatic emphasis had slightly infected his conversation and given it a declamatory tone, as will have been seen in his interview with Dumay. When once the mind has become foppish, manners show the influence. Canalis had come at last to a sort of rhythmic gait, he invented attitudes, stole looks at himself in the glass, and made his language harmonize with the position he assumed. He thought so much of the effect to be produced, that more than once Blondet, a mocking spirit, had bet he would pull him up short—and had done it—merely by fixing a set gaze on the poet's hair, or boots, or the tail of his coat.

At the end of ten years these antics, which at first had passed under favor of youthful exuberance, had grown stale, and all the more so as Melchior himself seemed somewhat worn. Fashionable life is as fatiguing for men as for women, and perhaps the Duchess' twenty years' seniority weighed on Canalis more than on her; for the world saw her still handsome, without a wrinkle, without rouge, and without heart. Alas! neither men nor women have a friend to warn them at the moment when the fragrance of modesty turns rancid, when a caressing look is like a theatrical trick, when the expressiveness of a face becomes a grimace, when the mechanism of their liveliness shows its rusty skeleton. Genius alone can renew its youth like the serpent, and in grace, as in all else, only the heart never grows stale. Persons of genuine feeling are single-hearted. Now in Canalis, as we know, the heart was dry. He wasted the beauty of his gaze by assuming at inappropriate moments the intensity that deep thought gives to the eyes.

And, then, praise to him was an article of exchange, in

which he wanted to have all the advantage. His way of paying compliments, which charmed superficial persons, to those of more refined taste might seem insultingly commonplace, and the readiness of his flattery betrayed a set purpose. In fact, Melchior lied like a courtier. To the Duc de Chaulieu, who had proved an ineffective speaker when, as Minister for Foreign Affairs, he had been obliged to mount the Tribune, Canalis had unblushingly said, "Your Excellency was sublime!"

Many men like Canalis might have had their affectations eradicated by failure administered in small doses. Trifling, indeed, as such faults are in the gilded drawing-rooms of the Faubourg Saint-Germain—where everyone contributes a quota of absurdities, and this kind of audacity, artificiality, inflation if you will, has a background of excessive luxury and magnificent dress which is perhaps an excuse for it—they are monstrously conspicuous in the depths of the country, where what is thought ridiculous is the very opposite of all this. Canalis, indeed, at once pompous and mannered, could not now metamorphose himself; he had had time to set in the mould into which the Duchess had cast him, and he was, moreover, very Parisian, or, if you prefer it, very French. The Parisian is amazed that everything, everywhere, is not what it is in Paris, and the Frenchman that it is not what it is in France. Good taste consists in accommodating oneself to the manners of other places without losing too much of one's native character, as Alcibiades did—the model of a gentleman. True grace is elastic. It yields to every circumstance, it is in harmony with every social atmosphere, it knows how to walk in the street in a cheap dress, remarkable only for its fitness, instead of parading the feathers and gaudy hues which some vulgar people flaunt.

Now, Canalis, influenced by a woman who loved him for her own sake rather than for his, wanted to be himself a law, and to remain what he was wherever he might go. He believed that he carried his private public with him—a mistake shared by some other great men in Paris.

While the poet made a studied entrance into the little drawing-room, la Brière sneaked in like a dog that is afraid of being beaten.

"Ah, here is my soldier!" said Canalis, on seeing Dumay, after paying Madame Mignon his respects, and bowing to the other women. "Your anxieties are relieved, I hope?" he went on, offering him his hand with a flourish. "But the sight of mademoiselle sufficiently explains their gravity. I spoke only of earthly beings, not of angels."

The hearers by their expression asked for a clue to this riddle.

"Yes, I shall regard it as a triumph," the poet went on, understanding that everybody wanted an explanation, "that I succeeded in alarming one of those men of iron whom Napoleon succeeded in finding to form the piles on which he tried to found an empire too vast to be permanent. Only time can serve to cement such a structure!—But have I any right to boast of my triumph? I had nothing to do with it; it was the triumph of fancy over fact. Your battles, dear Monsieur Dumay; your heroic cavalry charges, Monsieur le Comte; in short, War, was the form assumed by Napoleon's thoughts. And of all these things what remains? The grass that grows over them knows nothing of them, nor will harvests mark the spot; but for history, but for writing, the future might know nothing of this heroic age! Thus your fifteen years of struggle are no more than ideas, and that is what will save the Empire; poets will make a poem of it. A land that can win such battles ought to be able to sing them!"

Canalis paused to collect, by a sweeping glance at their faces, the tribute of admiration due to him from these country folks.

"You cannot doubt, monsieur," said Madame Mignon, "how much I regret being unable to see you, from the way you indemnify me by the pleasure I feel in listening to you."

Modeste, dressed as she had been on the day when this story opens, having made up her mind to think Canalis

sublime, sat speechless, and dropped her embroidery, which hung from her fingers at the end of the needleful of cotton.

"Modeste, this is Monsieur de la Brière.—Monsieur Ernest —my daughter," said Charles Mignon, thinking that the secretary was thrown rather too much into the background.

The young lady bowed coldly to Ernest, giving him a look intended to convey to the whole party that she had never seen him before.

"I beg your pardon," said she, without a blush, "the fervent admiration I profess for our greatest poet is, in my friends' eyes, a sufficient excuse for my having seen no one else."

The clear young voice, with a ring in it like the famous tones of Mademoiselle Mars, enchanted the poor Referendary, already dazzled by Modeste's beauty, and in his amazement he spoke a few words which, had they been true, would have been sublime:

"But he is my friend," said he.

"Then you will have forgiven me," she replied.

"He is more than a friend," cried Canalis, taking Ernest by the shoulder, and leaning on him as Alexander leaned on Hephaestion. "We love each other like two brothers——"

Madame Latournelle cut the poet short in the middle of his speech by saying to her husband:

"Surely monsieur is the gentleman we saw in church?"

"Why not?" said Charles Mignon, seeing Ernest color.

Modeste gave no sign, but took up her work again.

"You may be right; I have been twice to le Havre," said la Brière, sitting down by the side of Dumay.

Canalis, bewildered by Modeste's beauty, misunderstood the admiration she expressed, and flattered himself that his efforts had been perfectly successful.

"I should think a man of genius devoid of heart if he had not about him some attached friend," said Modeste, to revive the subject interrupted by Madame Latournelle's awkwardness.

"Mademoiselle, Ernest's devotion is enough to make me

believe that I am good for something," said Canalis. "For my dear Pylades is full of talent; he was quite half of the greatest Minister we have had since the Peace. Though he fills a distinguished position, he consents to be my tutor in politics. He teaches me business, he feeds me with his experience, while he might aspire to the highest office. Oh! he is much superior to me——"

At a gesture from Modeste, Melchior added gracefully:

"The poetry I write he bears in his heart; and if I dare speak so to his face, it is because he is as diffident as a nun."

"Come, come, that will do," said la Brière, who did not know how to look. "My dear fellow, you might be a mother wanting to get her daughter married."

"How can you think, monsieur, of becoming a politician?" said Charles Mignon to Canalis.

"For a poet it is abdication!" said Modeste. "Politics are the stand-by of men without imagination."

"Nay, mademoiselle, in these days the Tribune is the grandest stage in the world; it has taken the place of the lists of chivalry; it will be the meeting-place of every kind of intellect, as of old the army was of every form of courage."

Canalis had mounted his war-horse; for ten minutes he declaimed on the subject of political life:—Poetry was the preface to a statesman. In these days the orator's province was lofty generalization; he was the pastor of ideas. If a poet could show his countrymen the road of the future, did he cease to be himself? He quoted Chateaubriand, asserting that he would some day be more important on his political than on his literary side. The French Chambers would be the guiding light of humanity. Contests by words henceforth had taken the place of fighting on the battlefield. Such or such a sitting had been a second Austerlitz, and the speakers had risen to the dignity of generals; they spent as much of their life, courage, and strength, they wore themselves out as much as generals in war. Was not speech almost the most exhausting expenditure of vital power that man could indulge in, etc., etc.

This long harangue, made up of modern commonplace, but clothed in high-sounding phrases, newly-coined words, and intended to prove that the Baron de Canalis must some day be one of the glories of the Tribune, made a deep impression on the notary, on Gobenheim, on Madame Latournelle, and Madame Mignon. Modeste felt as if she were at the play and fired with enthusiasm for the actor, exactly as Ernest was in her presence; for though the secretary knew all these fine phrases by heart, he was listening to them by the light of the girl's eyes, and falling in love to the verge of madness. To this genuine lover Modeste had eclipsed all the different Modestes he had pictured to himself when reading or answering her letters.

This visit, of which Canalis had fixed the limits beforehand, for he would not give his admirers time to get tired of him, ended by an invitation to dinner on the following Monday.

"We shall no longer be at the Chalet," said the Comte de la Bastie; "it is Dumay's home once more. I am going back to my old house by an agreement for six months, with the right of redemption, which I have just signed with Monsieur Vilquin in my friend Latournelle's office."

"I only hope," said Dumay, "that Vilquin may not be in a position to repay the sum you have lent him on it."

"You will be in a home suitable to your fortune," said Canalis.

"To the fortune I am supposed to have," Charles Mignon put in.

"It would be a pity," said the poet, with a charming bow to Modeste, "that this Madonna should lack a frame worthy of her divine perfections."

This was all that Canalis said about Modeste, for he had affected not to look at her, and to behave like a man who is not at liberty to think of marriage.

"Oh, my dear Madame Mignon, he is immensely clever!" exclaimed the notary's wife, when the gravel was heard crunching under the Parisians' feet.

"Is he rich? that is the question," said Gobenheim.

Modeste stood at the window, not missing a single gesture of the great poet's, and never casting a glance on Ernest de la Brière. When Monsieur Mignon came into the room again, and Modeste, after receiving a parting bow from the two young men as the carriage turned, had resumed her seat, a deep discussion ensued, such as country people indulge in on Paris visitors after a first meeting. Gobenheim reiterated his remark, "Is he rich?" in reply to the trio of praise sung by Madame Latournelle, Modeste, and her mother.

"Rich?" retorted Modeste. "What can it matter? Cannot you see that Monsieur de Canalis is a man destined to fill the highest posts in the Government? He has more than wealth; he has the means of acquiring wealth!"

"He will be an Ambassador or a Minister," said Monsieur Mignon.

"The taxpayers may have to pay for his funeral nevertheless," said little Latournelle.

"Why?" asked Charles Mignon.

"He strikes me as being a man to squander all the fortunes which Mademoiselle Modeste so liberally credits him with the power of earning."

"How can Modeste help being liberal to a man who regards her as a Madonna?" said Dumay, faithful to the aversion Canalis had roused in him.

Gobenheim was preparing the whist-table, with all the more eagerness because since Monsieur Mignon's return Latournelle and Dumay had allowed themselves to play for ten sous a point.

"Now, my little darling," said the father to his daughter in the window recess, "you must own that papa thinks of everything. In a week, if you send orders this evening to the dressmaker you used to employ in Paris and to your other tradesmen, you may display yourself in all the magnificence of an heiress, while I take time to settle into our old house. You shall have a nice pony, so take care to have a habit made—the Master of the Horse deserves that little attention."

"All the more so as we must show our friends the country,"

said Modeste, whose cheeks were recovering the hues of health.

"The secretary," said Madame Mignon, "is not much to speak of."

"He is a little simpleton," said Madame Latournelle. "The poet was attentive to everybody. He remembered to thank Latournelle for finding him a house, by saying to me that he seemed to have consulted a lady's taste. And the other stood there as gloomy as a Spaniard, staring hard, looking as if he could swallow Modeste. If he had looked at me so, I should have been frightened."

"He has a very pleasant voice," Madame Mignon observed.

"He must have come to le Havre to make inquiries about the house of Mignon for the poet's benefit," said Modeste, with a sly look at her father. "He is certainly the man we saw in church."

Madame Dumay and the Latournelles accepted this explanation of Ernest's former journey.

"I tell you what, Ernest," said Canalis when they had gone twenty yards, "I see no one in the Paris world, not a single girl to marry, that can compare with this adorable creature!"

"Oh! it is all settled," replied la Brière, with concentrated bitterness; "she loves you—or, if you choose, she will love you. Your fame half won the battle. In short, you have only to command. You can go there alone next time; Modeste has the deepest contempt for me, and she is right; but I do not see why I should condemn myself to the torture of going to admire, desire, and adore what I never can possess."

After a few condoling speeches, in which Canalis betrayed his satisfaction at having produced a new edition of Cæsar's famous motto, he hinted at his wish to be "off" with the Duchesse de Chaulieu. La Brière, who could not endure the conversation, made an excuse of the loveliness of a rather doubtful night to get out and walk; he flew like a madman to the cliffs, where he stayed till half-past ten, given up to a sort of frenzy, sometimes walking at a great pace and spout-

ing soliloquies, sometimes standing still or sitting down, without observing the uneasiness he was giving to two coastguards on the lookout. After falling in love with Modeste's mental culture and aggressive candor, he now added his adoration of her beauty, that is to say, an unreasoning and inexplicable passion to all the other causes that had brought him ten days ago to church at le Havre.

Then he wandered back to the Chalet, where the Pyrenean dogs barked at him so furiously that he could not allow himself the happiness of gazing at Modeste's windows. In love, all these thing are of no more account than the underpainting covered by the final touches is to the painter; but they are nevertheless the whole of love, as concealed painstaking is the whole of art; the outcome is a great painter and a perfect lover, which the public and the woman worship at last—often too late.

"Well!" cried he aloud, "I will stay, I will endure. I shall see her and love her selfishly, for my own joy! Modeste will be my sun, my life, I shall breathe by her breath, I shall rejoice in her joys, I shall pine over her sorrows, even if she should be the wife of that egoist Canalis——"

"That is something like love, monsieur!" said a voice proceeding from a bush by the wayside. "Bless me! is everybody in love with Mademoiselle de la Bastie?"

Butscha started forth and gazed at la Brière. Ernest sheathed his wrath as he looked at the dwarf in the moonlight, and walked on a few steps without replying.

"Two soldiers serving in the same company should be on better terms than that," said Butscha. "If you are not in love with Canalis, I am not very sweet on him myself."

"He is my friend," said Ernest.

"Oh! then you are the little secretary?" replied the hunchback.

"I would have you to know, monsieur," said la Brière, "that I am no man's secretary. I have the honor to call myself councillor to one of the High Courts of Justice of this realm."

"I have the honor, then, of making my bow to Monsieur

de la Brière," said Butscha. "I have the honor to call myself head clerk to Maître Latournelle, the first notary in le Havre, and I certainly am better off than you are.—Yes—for I have had the happiness of seeing Mademoiselle Modeste de la Bastie almost every afternoon for the last four years, and I propose to live within her ken as one of the King's household lives at the Tuileries. If I were offered the throne of Russia, I should reply, 'I like the sun too well!'—Is not that as much as to say, monsieur, that I care for her more than for myself—with all respect and honor? And do you suppose that the high and mighty Duchesse de Chaulieu will look with a friendly eye on the happiness of Madame de Canalis, when her maid, who is in love with Monsieur Germain, and is already uneasy at that fascinating valet's long absence at le Havre, as she dresses her mistress' hair complains . . ."

"How do you know all this?" said la Brière, interrupting him.

"In the first place, I am a notary's clerk," replied Butscha. "And have you not observed that I have a hump? It is full of ingenuity, monsieur. I made myself cousin to Mademoiselle Philoxène Jacmin, of Honfleur, where my mother was born, also a Jacmin—there are eleven branches of Jacmins at Honfleur.—And so my fair cousin, tempted by the hope of a highly improbable legacy, told me a good many things."

"And the Duchess is vindictive?" said la Brière.

"As vengeful as a queen, said Philoxène. She has not yet forgiven the Duke for being only her husband," replied Butscha. "She hates as she loves. I am thoroughly informed as to her temper, her dress, her tastes, her religion, and her meannesses, for Philoxène stripped her body and soul. I went to the Opera to see Madame de Chaulieu, and I do not regret my ten francs—I am not thinking of the piece. If my hypothetical cousin had not told me that her mistress had seen fifty springs, I should have thought it lavish to give her thirty; she has known no winter, my lady the Duchess!"

"True," said la Brière, "she is a cameo preserved by the onyx.—Canalis would be in great difficulties if the Duchess

knew of his plans; and I hope, monsieur, that you will go no further in an espionage so unworthy of an honest man."

"Monsieur," said Butscha proudly, "to me Modeste is the State. I do not spy, I forestall! The Duchesse de Chaulieu will come here if necessary, or will remain quietly where she is if I think it advisable."

"You?"

"I."

"And by what means?" asked la Brière.

"Ah, that is the question," said the little hunchback. He plucked a blade of grass. "This little plant imagines that man builds palaces for its accommodation, and one day it dislodges the most firmly cemented marble, just as the populace, having found a foothold in the structure of the feudal system, overthrew it. The power of the weakest that can creep in everywhere is greater than that of the strong man who relies on his cannon. There are three of us, a Swiss league, who have sworn that Modeste shall be happy, and who would sell our honor for her sake.—Good-night, monsieur. If you love Mademoiselle de la Bastie, forget this conversation, and give me your hand to shake, for you seem to me to have a heart!—I was pining to see the Chalet; I got here just as she put out her candle. I saw you when the dogs gave tongue, I heard you raging; and so I took the liberty of telling you that we serve under the same colors, in the regiment of loyal devotion!"

"Good," replied la Brière, pressing the hunchback's hand. "Then be kind enough to tell me whether Mademoiselle Modeste ever fell in love with a man before her secret correspondence with Canalis?"

"Oh!" cried Butscha, "the mere question is an insult!—And even now who knows whether she is in love? Does she herself know? She has rushed into enthusiasm for the mind, the genius, the spirit of this verse-monger, this vendor of literary pinchbeck; but she will study him—we shall all study him; I will find some means of making his true character peep out from beneath the carapace of the well-man-

nered man, and we shall see the insignificant head of his ambition and his vanity," said Butscha, rubbing his hands. "Now, unless mademoiselle is mad enough to die of it——"

"Oh, she sat entranced before him as if he were a miracle!" cried la Brière, revealing the secret of his jealousy.

"If he is really a good fellow, and loyal, and loves her, if he is worthy of her," Butscha went on, "if he gives up his Duchess, it is the Duchess I will spread a net for!—There, my dear sir, follow that path, and you will be at home in ten minutes."

But Butscha presently turned back and called to the hapless Ernest, who, as an ardent lover, would have stayed all night to talk of Modeste.

"Monsieur," said Butscha, "I have not yet had the honor of seeing our great poet; I am anxious to study that splendid phenomenon in the exercise of his functions; do me the kindness to come and spend the evening at the Chalet the day after to-morrow; and stay some time, for a man does not completely betray himself in an hour. I shall know, before any one, if he loves, or ever will love, or ever could love Mademoiselle Modeste."

"You are very young to——"

"To be a professor!" said Butscha, interrupting la Brière. "Ah, monsieur, the deformed come into the world a hundred years old. Besides, a sick man, you see, when he has been ill a long time, becomes more knowing than his doctor; he understands the ways of the disease, which is more than a conscientious doctor always does. Well, in the same way, a man who loves a woman while the woman cannot help scorning him for his ugliness or his misshapen person, is at last so qualified in love that he could pass as a seducer, as the sick man at last recovers his health. Folly alone is incurable. —Since the age of six, and I am now five-and-twenty, I have had neither father nor mother; public charity has been my mother, and the King's commissioner my father.—Nay, do not be distressed," he said, in reply to Ernest's expression, "I am less miserable than my position—— Well, since I was six

years old, when the insolent eyes of a servant of Madame Latournelle's told me I had no right to wish to love, I have loved and have studied women. I began with ugly ones—it is well to take a bull by the horns. So I took for the first subject of my studies Madame Latournelle herself, who has been really angelic to me. I was perhaps wrong; however, so it was. I distilled her in my alembic, and I at last discovered hidden in a corner of her soul this idea, 'I am not as ugly as people think!'—And in spite of her deep piety, by working on that idea, I could have led her to the brink of the abyss—to leave her there."

"And have you studied Modeste?"

"I thought I had told you," replied the hunchback, "that my life is hers, as France is the King's! Now do you understand my playing the spy in Paris? I alone know all the nobleness and pride, the unselfishness, and unexpected sweetness that lie in the heart and soul of that adorable creature—the indefatigable kindness, the true piety, the light-heartedness, information, refinement, affability——"

Butscha drew out his handkerchief to stop two tears from falling, and la Brière held his hand for some time.

"I shall live in her radiance! It comes from her, and it ends in me, that is how we are united, somewhat as nature is to God by light and the word.—Good-night, monsieur, I never chattered so much in my life; but seeing you below her windows, I guessed that you loved her in my way."

Butscha, without waiting for an answer, left the unhappy lover, on whose heart this conversation had shed a mysterious balm. Ernest determined to make Butscha his friend, never suspecting that the clerk's loquacity was chiefly intended to open communications with Canalis' house. In what a flow and ebb of thoughts, resolutions, and schemes was Ernest lapped before falling asleep; and his friend Canalis was sleeping the sleep of the triumphant, the sweetest slumber there is next to that of the just.

At breakfast the friends agreed to go together to spend the evening of the following day at the Chalet, and be

initiated into the mild joys of provincial whist. To get rid of this day they ordered the horses, both warranted to ride and drive, and ventured forth into a country certainly as unknown to them as China; for the least known thing in France to a Frenchman, is France.

As he reflected on his position as a lover rejected and scorned, the secretary made somewhat such a study of himself as he had been led to make by the question Modeste had put to him at the beginning of their correspondence. Though misfortune is supposed to develop virtues, it only does so in virtuous people; for this sort of cleaning up of the conscience takes place only in naturally cleanly persons. La Brière determined to swallow his griefs with Spartan philosophy, to preserve his dignity, and never allow himself to be betrayed into a mean action; while Canalis, fascinated by such an enormous fortune, vowed to himself that he would neglect nothing that might captivate Modeste. Egoism and unselfishness, the watchwords of these two natures, brought them by a moral law, which sometimes has whimsical results, to behave in opposition to their characters. The selfish man meant to act self-sacrifice, the man who was all kindness would take refuge on the Aventine Hill of pride. This phenomenon may also be seen in politics. Men often turn their natures inside out, and not infrequently the public do not know the right side from the wrong.

After dinner they heard from Germain that the Master of the Horse had arrived; he was introduced at the Chalet that evening by Monsieur Latournelle. Mademoiselle d'Hérouville managed to offend the worthy lawyer at once, by sending a message through a footman, desiring him to call at her house, instead of simply sending her nephew to take up the lawyer, who would certainly have talked till his dying day of the visit paid by the Master of the Horse. So when his lordship offered to take him to Ingouville in his carriage, the little notary merely said that he must return home to accompany his wife. Seeing by his sullen manner that there was something wrong, the Duke graciously replied, "If you

will allow me, I shall have the honor of going round to fetch Madame Latournelle."

In spite of an emphatic shrug of his despotic aunt's shoulders, the Duke set out with the little notary. Intoxicated with the delight of seeing a magnificent carriage at her door, and men in the royal livery to let down the steps, the lawyer's wife did not know which way to turn for her gloves, her parasol, her bag, and her dignity, when it was announced to her that the Master of the Horse had come to fetch her. As soon as she was in the carriage, while pouring out civilities to the little Duke, she suddenly exclaimed with kindly impulse:

"Oh, and Butscha?"

"Bring Butscha too," said the Duke, smiling.

As the harbor-men, who had collected round the dazzling vehicle, saw these three little men with that tall meagre woman, they looked at each other and laughed.

"If you stuck them together end to end, perhaps you might make a man tall enough for that long May-pole," said a sailor from Bordeaux.

"Have you anything else to take with you, madame," the Duke asked jestingly, as the footman stood waiting for his orders.

"No, monseigneur," replied she, turning scarlet, and looking at her husband as much as to say, "What have I done wrong?"

"His Lordship," said Butscha, "does me too much honor in speaking of me as a thing; a poor clerk like me is a nameless object."

Though he spoke lightly, the Duke colored and made no reply. Grand folks are always in the wrong to bandy jests with those below them. Banter is a game, and a game implies equality. And, indeed, it is to obviate the unpleasant results of such a transient familiarity that, when the game is over, the players have a right not to recognize each other.

The Duke's visit to le Havre was ostensibly for the settlement of an immense undertaking, namely, the reclaiming of

a vast tract of land, left dry by the sea between two streams, of which the ownership had just been confirmed to the Hérouville family by the High Court of Appeal. The proposed scheme was no less a matter than the adjustment of sluice gates to two bridges, to drain a tract of mud flats extending for about a kilometre, with a breadth of three or four hundred acres, to embank roads and dig dikes. When the Duc d'Hérouville had explained the nature and position of the land, Charles Mignon observed that he would have to wait till nature had enabled the soil to settle by the consolidation of its still shifting natural constituents.

"Time, which has providentially enriched your estate, Monsieur le Duc, must be left to complete its work," said he, in conclusion. "You will do well to wait another fifty years before setting to work."

"Do not let that be your final opinion, Monsieur le Comte," said the Duke. "Come to Hérouville, see, and judge for yourself."

Charles Mignon replied that some capitalist would need to look into the matter with a cool head; and this remark had given Monsieur d'Hérouville an excuse for calling at the Chalet.

Modeste made a deep impression on him; he begged the favor of a visit from her, saying that his aunt and sister had heard of her, and would be happy to make her acquaintance. On this, Charles Mignon proposed to introduce his daughter to the two ladies, and invited them to dine with him on the day when he should be re-established in his former home; this the Duke accepted. The nobleman's blue ribbon, his title, and, above all, his rapturous glances, had their effect on Modeste; still, she was admirably calm in speech, manner, and dignity. The Duke when he left seemed loath to depart, but he had received an invitation to go to the Chalet every evening, on the pretext that, of course, no courtier of Charles X. could possibly endure an evening without a game of whist.

So, on the following evening, Modeste was to see her three admirers all on the stage at once.

Say what she will, it is certainly flattering to a girl to see several rivals fluttering around her, men of talent, fame, or high birth, all trying to shine and please her, though the logic of the heart will lead her to sacrifice everything to personal predilection. Even if Modeste should lose credit by the admission, she owned, at a later day, that the feelings expressed in her letters had paled before the pleasure of seeing three men, so different, vying with each other—three men, each of whom would have done honor to the most exacting family pride. At the same time, this luxury of vanity gave way before the misanthropical spirit of mischief engendered by the bitter affront which she already thought of merely as a disappointment. So when her father said to her with a smile:

"Well, Modeste, would you like to be a duchess?"

"Ill fortune has made me philosophical," she replied, with a mocking courtesy.

"You are content to be Baroness?" said Butscha.

"Or Viscountess?" replied her father.

"How could that be?" said Modeste quickly.

"Why, if you were to accept Monsieur de la Brière, he would certainly have influence enough with the King to get leave to take my title and bear my arms."

"Oh, if it is a matter of borrowing a disguise, he will make no difficulties!" replied Modeste bitterly.

Butscha did not understand this sarcasm, of which only Monsieur and Madame Mignon and Dumay knew the meaning.

"As soon as marriage is in question, every man assumes a disguise," said Madame Latournelle, "the women set them the example. Ever since I can remember I have heard it said, 'Monsieur this or mademoiselle that is making a very good match'—so the other party must be making a bad one, I suppose?"

"Marriage," said Butscha, "is like an action at law; one side is always left dissatisfied; and if one party deceives the other, half the married couples one sees certainly play the farce at the cost of the other."

"Whence you conclude, Sire Butscha?" asked Modeste.

"That we must always keep our eyes sternly open to the enemy's movements," replied the clerk.

"What did I tell you, my pet?" said Charles Mignon, alluding to his conversation with his daughter on the seashore.

"Men, to get married," said Latournelle, "play as many parts as mothers make their daughters play in order to get them off their hands."

"Then you think stratagem allowable?" said Modeste.

"On both sides," cried Gobenheim. "Then the game is even."

This conversation was carried on in a fragmentary manner, between the deals, and mixed up with the opinions each one allowed himself to express about Monsieur d'Hérouville, who was thought quite good-looking by the little notary, by little Dumay, and by little Butscha.

"I see," said Madame Mignon, with a smile, "that Madame Latournelle and my husband are quite monsters here!"

"Happily for him the Colonel is not excessively tall," replied Butscha, while the lawyer was dealing, "for a tall man who is also intelligent is always a rare exception."

But for this little discussion on the legitimate use of matrimonial wiles, the account of the evening so anxiously expected by Butscha might seem lengthy; but wealth, for which so much secret meanness was committed, may perhaps lend to the minutiæ of private life the interest which is always aroused by the social feeling so frankly set forth by Ernest in his reply to Modeste.

In the course of the next morning Desplein arrived. He stayed only so long as was needful for sending to le Havre for a relay of post-horses, which were at once put in—about an hour. After examining Madame Mignon, he said she would certainly recover her sight, and fixed the date for the operation a month later. This important consultation was held, of course, in the presence of the family party at the Chalet, all anxiously eager to hear the decision of the Prince of

Science. The illustrious member of the Academy of Science asked the blind woman ten short questions, while examining her eyes in the bright light by the window. Modeste, amazed at the value of time to this famous man, noticed that his traveling chaise was full of books, which he intended to read on the way back to Paris, for he had come away on the previous evening, spending the night in sleeping and traveling.

The swiftness and clearness of Desplein's decisions on every answer of Madame Mignon's, his curt speech, his manner, all gave Modeste, for the first time, any clear idea of a man of genius. She felt the enormous gulf between Canalis, a man of second-rate talents, and Desplein, a more than superior mind.

A man of genius has in the consciousness of his talent, and the assurance of his fame, a domain, as it were, where his legitimate pride can move and breathe freely without incommoding other people. Then the incessant conflict with men and things gives him no time to indulge the coquettish conceits in which the heroes of fashion indulge, as they hastily reap the harvest of a passing season, while their vanity and self-love are exacting and irritable, like a sort of custom-house alert to seize a toll on everything that passes within its ken.

Modeste was all the more delighted with the great surgeon because he seemed struck by her extreme beauty—he, under whose hands so many women had passed, and who for years had been scrutinizing them with the lancet and microscope.

"It would really be too bad," said he, with the gallantry which he could so well assume, in contrast to his habitual abruptness, "that a mother should be deprived of seeing such a lovely daughter."

Modeste herself waited on the great surgeon at the simple luncheon he would accept. She, with her father and Dumay, escorted the learned man, for whom so many sick were longing, as far as the chaise which waited for him at the side gate, and there, her eyes beaming with hope, she said once more to Desplein:

"Then dear mamma will really see me?"

"Yes, my pretty Will-o'-the-Wisp, I promise you she shall," he replied, with a smile; "and I am incapable of deceiving you, for I too have a daughter."

The horses whirled him off as he spoke the words, which had an unexpected touch of feeling. Nothing is more bewitching than the unforeseen peculiar to very clever men.

This visit was the event of the day, and it left a track of light in Modeste's soul. The enthusiastic child admired without guile this man whose life was at everybody's command, and in whom the habit of contemplating physical suffering had overcome every appearance of egoism.

In the evening, when Gobenheim, the Latournelles, Canalis, Ernest, and the Duc d'Hérouville had assembled, they congratulated the Mignon family on the good news given them by Desplein. Then, of course, the conversation, led by Modeste, as we know her from her letters, turned on this man whose genius, unfortunately for his glory, could only be appreciated by the most learned men and the Medical Faculty. And Gobenheim uttered this speech, which is in our days the sanctifying anointing of genius in the ears of economists and bankers:

"He makes enormous sums."

"He is said to be very greedy!" replied Canalis.

The praise lavished on Desplein by Modeste annoyed the poet. Vanity behaves like Woman. They both believe that they lose something by praise or affection bestowed on another. Voltaire was jealous of the wit of a man whom Paris admired for two days, just as a duchess takes offence at a glance bestowed on her waiting maid. So great is the avarice of these two feelings, that they feel robbed of a pittance bestowed on the poor.

"And do you think, monsieur," asked Modeste, with a smile, "that a genius should be measured, by the ordinary standard?"

"It would first be necessary, perhaps," said Canalis, "to define a man of genius. One of his prime characteristics is inventiveness—the invention of a type, of a system, of a

power. Napoleon was an inventor, apart from his other characteristics of genius. He invented his method of warfare. Walter Scott is an inventor, Linnæus was an inventor, so are Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire and Cuvier. Such men are geniuses above all else. They renew, or expand, or modify science or art. But Desplein is a man whose immense talent consists in applying laws that were previously discovered; in detecting, by natural intuition, the final tendency of every temperament, and the hour marked out by nature for the performance of an operation. He did not, like Hippocrates, lay the foundations of Science itself. He has not discovered a system, like Galen, Broussais, or Rasori. His is the genius of the executant, like Moscheles on the piano, Paganini on the violin, or Farinelli on his own larynx—men who display immense powers, but who do not create music. Between Beethoven and Madame Catalani you will allow that to him should be awarded the crown of genius and suffering; to her a vast heap of five-franc pieces. We can pay our debt to one, while the world must for ever remain in debt to the other! We owe more and more to Molière every day, and we have already overpaid Baron."

"It seems to me that you are giving too large a share to ideas, my dear fellow," said la Brière, in a sweet and gentle voice that was in startling contrast to the poet's peremptory style, for his flexible voice had lost its insinuating tone and assumed the dominant ring of rhetoric. "Genius ought to be estimated chiefly for its utility. Parmentier, Jacquard, and Papin, to whom statues will one day be erected, were also men of genius. They have in a certain direction altered, or will alter, the face of nations. From this point of view Desplein will always appear in the eyes of thinking men accompanied by a whole generation whose tears and sufferings have been alleviated by his mighty hand."

That Ernest should have expressed this opinion was enough to prompt Modeste to contest it.

"In that case, monsieur," said she, "the man who should find means to reap corn without spoiling the straw, by a ma-

chine that should do the work of ten laborers, would be a man of genius?"

"Oh yes, my child," said Madame Mignon, "he would be blessed by the poor, whose bread would then be cheaper; and he whom the poor bless is blessed by God."

"That is to give utility the preference over art," said Modeste, with a toss of her head."

"But for utility," said her father, "on what would art be founded? On what basis would it rest, on what would the poet live, and who would give him shelter, who would pay him?"

"Oh, my dear father, that is quite the view of a merchant captain, a Philistine, a counter-jumper. That Gobenheim or Monsieur de la Brière should hold it I can understand; they are interested in the solution of such social problems; but you, whose life has been so romantically useless to your age, since your blood spilt on the soil of Europe, and the terrible sufferings required of you by a Colossus, have not hindered France from losing ten departments which the Republic had conquered,—how can you subscribe to a view so excessively *out of date,* as the Romantics have it? It is easy to see that you have dropped from China."

The disrespect of Modeste's speech was aggravated by the scornful and contemptuous flippancy of the tone in which she intentionally spoke, and which astonished Madame Latournelle, Madame Mignon, and Dumay. Madame Latournelle, though she opened her eyes wide enough, could not see what Modeste was driving at; Butscha, who was as alert as a spy, looked significantly at Monsieur Mignon on seeing his face flush with deep and sudden indignation.

"A little more, mademoiselle, and you would have failed in respect to your father," said the Colonel with a smile, enlightened by Butscha's glance. "That is what comes of spoiling a child."

"I am an only daughter!" she retorted insolently.

"Unique!" said the notary, with emphasis.

"Monsieur," said Modeste to Latournelle, "my father is

very willing that I should educate him. He gave me life, I give him wisdom—he will still be my debtor."

"But there is a way of doing it—and, above all, a time for it," said Madame Mignon.

"But mademoiselle is very right," said Canalis, rising, and placing himself by the chimney-piece in one of the finest postures of his collection of attitudes. "God in His foresight has given man food and clothing, and has not directly endowed him with Art! He has said to man, 'To eat, you must stoop to the earth; to think, you must uplift yourself to Me!' —We need the life of the soul as much as the life of the body. Hence there are two forms of utility—obviously we do not wear books on our feet. From the utilitarian point of view, a canto of an epic is not to compare with a bowl of cheap soup from a charity kitchen. The finest idea in the world cannot take the place of the sail of a ship. An automatic boiler, no doubt, by lifting itself two inches, supplies us with calico thirty sous a yard cheaper; but this machine and the inventions of industry do not breathe the life of the people, and will never tell the future that it has existed; whereas Egyptian art, Mexican art, Greek or Roman art, with their masterpieces, stigmatized as useless, have borne witness to the existence of these nations through a vast space of time in places where great intermediate nations have vanished without leaving even a name-card, for lack of men of genius! Works of genius form the *summum* of a civilization, and presuppose a great use. You, no doubt, would not think a pair of boots better in itself than a drama, nor prefer a windmill to the Church of Saint-Ouen? Well, a nation is moved by the same spirit as an individual, and man's favorite dream is to survive himself morally, as he reproduces himself physically. What survives of a nation is the work of its men of genius.

"At this moment France is a vigorous proof of the truth of this proposition. She is assuredly outdone by England in industry, commerce, and navigation; nevertheless, she leads the world, I believe, by her artists, her gifted men, and the taste of her products. There is not an artist, not a man of

mark anywhere, who does not come to Paris to win his patent of mastery. There is at this day no school of painting but in France; and we shall rule by the Book more surely perhaps, and for longer, than by the Sword.

"Under Ernest's system the flowers of luxury would be suppressed—the beauty of woman, music, painting, and poetry. Society would not, indeed, be overthrown; but who would accept life on such terms? All that is useful is horrible and ugly. The kitchen is indispensable in a house, but you take good care never to stay in it; you live in a drawing-room, ornamented, as this is, with perfectly superfluous things. Of what use are those beautiful pictures and all this carved woodwork? Nothing is beautiful but what we feel to be useless. We have called the sixteenth century the age of the Renaissance with admirable accuracy of expression. That century was the dawn of a new world; men will still talk of it when some preceding ages are forgotten, whose sole merit will be that they have existed—like the millions of beings that are of no account in a generation."

"*Guenille, soit! ma guenille m'est chère*"—"A poor thing, but mine own," said the Duc d'Hérouville playfully, during the silence that followed this pompous declamation of prose.

"But," said Butscha, taking up the cudgels against Canalis, "does the art exist which, according to you, is the sphere in which genius should disport itself? Is it not rather a magnificent fiction which social man is madly bent on believing? What need have I for a landscape in Normandy hanging in my room, when I can go and see it so well done by God? We have in our dreams finer poems than the *Iliad*. For a very moderate sum I can find at Valognes, at Carentan, as in Provence, at Arles, Venuses quite as lovely as Titian's. The *Police News* publishes romances, different indeed from Walter Scott's, but with terrible endings, in real blood, and not in ink. Happiness and virtue are far above art and genius!"

"Bravo, Butscha!" cried Madame Latournelle.

"What did he say?" asked Canalis of la Brière, ceasing

to watch Modeste, in whose eyes and attitude he read the delightful evidence of her artless admiration.

The scorn with which he had been treated, and, above all, the girl's disrespectful speech to her father, had so depressed the unhappy la Brière that he made no reply; his gaze, sadly fixed on Modeste, betrayed absorbed meditation. The little clerk's argument was, however, repeated with some wit by the Duc d'Hérouville, who ended by saying that the raptures of Saint Theresa were far superior to the inventions of Lord Byron.

"Oh, Monsieur le Duc," remarked Modeste, "that is wholly personal poetry, while Lord Byron's or Molière's is for the benefit of the world——"

"Then you must make your peace with the Baron," interrupted her father quickly. "Now you are insisting that genius is to be useful, as much so as cotton; but you will, perhaps, think logic as stale and out of date as your poor old father."

Butscha, la Brière, and Madame Latournelle exchanged half-laughing glances, which spurred Modeste on in her career of provocation, all the more because for a moment she was checked.

"Nay, mademoiselle," said Canalis with a smile, "we have not fought nor even contradicted each other. Every work of art, whether in literature, music, painting, sculpture, or architecture, carries with it a positive social utility, like that of any other form of commercial produce. Art is the truest form of commerce; it takes it for granted. A book in these days helps its writer to pocket about ten thousand francs, and its production involves printing, paper-making, type-founding, and the booksellers' trade; that is to say, the occupation of thousands of hands. The performance of a symphony by Beethoven or of an opera by Rossini demands quite as many hands, machines, and forms of industry.

"The cost of a building is a still more tangible answer to the objection. It may, indeed, be said that works of genius rest on a very costly basis, and are necessarily profitable to the working man."

Fairly started on this text, Canalis talked on for some minutes with a lavish use of imagery, and reveling in his own words; but it befell him, as often happens with great talkers, to find himself at the end of his harangue just where he started, and agreeing with la Brière, though he failed to perceive it.

"I discern with pleasure, my dear Baron," said the little Duke slily, "that you will make a great constitutional Minister."

"Oh," said Canalis, with an ostentatious flourish, "what do we prove by all our discussions? The eternal truth of this axiom, 'Everything is true and everything is false.' Moral truths, like living beings, may be placed in an atmosphere where they change their appearance to the point of being unrecognizable?"

"Society lives by condemned things," said the Duc d'Hérouville.

"What flippancy!" said Madame Latournelle in a low voice to her husband.

"He is a poet," said Gobenheim, who overheard her.

Canalis, who had soared ten leagues above his audience, and who was, perhaps, right in his final philosophical dictum, took the sort of chill he read on every face for a symptom of ignorance; but he saw that Modeste understood him, and was content, never discerning how offensive such a monologue is to country folks, whose one idea is to prove to Parisians the vitality, intelligence, and good judgment of the provinces.

"Is it long since you last saw the Duchesse de Chaulieu?" asked the Duke of Canalis, to change the subject.

"I saw her six days ago," replied Canalis.

"And she is well?"

"Perfectly well."

"Remember me to her, pray, when you write."

"I hear she is charming," Modeste remarked to the Duke.

"Monsieur le Baron," said he, "knows more about that than I do."

"She is more than charming," said Canalis, accepting the

Duke's perfidious challenge. "But I am partial, mademoiselle; she has been my friend these ten years. I owe to her all that may be good in me; she has sheltered me from the perils of the world. Besides, the Duc de Chaulieu started me in the way I am going. But for their influence the King and Princesses would often have forgotten a poor poet as I am; my affection, therefore, is always full of gratitude."

And he spoke with tears in his voice.

"How much we all ought to love the woman who has inspired you with such sublime song and such a noble sentiment," said Modeste with feeling. "Can one conceive of a poet without a Muse?"

"He would have no heart," said Canalis; "he would write verse as dry as Voltaire's—who never loved any one but Voltaire."

"When I was in Paris," said Dumay, "did you not do me the honor of assuring me that you felt none of the feelings you expressed?"

"A straight hit, my worthy soldier," replied the poet with a smile; "but you must understand that at the same time it is allowable to have a great deal of heart in the intellectual life as well as in real life. A man may express very fine sentiments without feeling them, or feel them without being able to express them. La Brière, my friend here, loves to distraction," said he generously, as he looked at Modeste. "I, who love at least as much as he does, believe—unless I am under an illusion—that I can give my passion a literary form worthy of its depth.—Still, I will not answer for it, mademoiselle," said he, turning to Modeste with a rather over elaborate grace, "that I shall not be bereft of wits by to-morrow——"

And thus the poet triumphed over every obstacle, burning in honor of his love the sticks they tried to trip him up with, while Modeste was dazzled by this Parisian brilliancy, which was unfamiliar to her, and which lent a glitter to the orator's rhetoric.

"What a mountebank!" said Butscha in a whisper to Latournelle, after listening to a magniloquent tirade on the

Catholic religion, and the happiness of having a pious wife, poured out in response to an observation from Madame Mignon.

Modeste had a bandage over her eyes; the effect of his delivery, and the attention she intentionally devoted to Canalis, prevented her perceiving what Butscha saw and noted—the declamatory tone, the lack of simplicity, rant taking the place of feeling, and all the incoherence which prompted the clerk's rather too severe epithet.

While Monsieur Mignon, Dumay, Butscha, and Latournelle wondered at the poet's want of sequence, overlooking, indeed, the inevitable digressions of conversation, which in France is always very devious, Modeste was admiring the poet's versatility, saying to herself as she led him to follow the tortuous windings of her fancy, "He loves me!"

Butscha, like all the other spectators of this performance, as we must call it, was struck by the chief fault of all egoists, which Canalis shows a little too much, like all men who are accustomed to speechify in drawing-rooms. Whether he knew beforehand what the other speaker meant to say, or merely did not listen, or had the power of listening while thinking of something else, Melchior wore the look of inattention which is as disconcerting to another man's flow of words as it is wounding to his vanity.

Not to attend to what is said is not merely a lack of politeness; it is an expression of contempt. And Canalis carries this habit rather too far, for he often neglects to reply to a remark that requires an answer, and goes off to the subject he is absorbed in without any polite transition. Though this form of impertinence may be accepted without protest from a man of position, it nevertheless creates a leaven of hatred and vengeful feeling at the bottom of men's hearts; in an equal, it may even break up a friendship.

When by any chance Melchior compels himself to listen, he falls into another failing—he only lends himself, he does not give himself up. Nothing in social intercourse pays better than the bestowal of attention. "Blessed are they that hear!"

is not only a precept of the Gospel, it is also an excellent speculation; act on it, and you will be forgiven everything, even vices. Canalis took much upon him in the intention of charming Modeste; but while he was sacrificing himself to her, he was himself all the while with the others.

Modeste, pitiless for the ten persons she was martyrizing, begged Canalis to read them some piece of his verse; she wanted to hear a specimen of that much-praised elocution.

Canalis took the volume offered him by Modeste and cooed —for that is the correct word—the poem that is supposed to be his finest, an imitation of Moore's "Loves of the Angels," entitled "Vitalis," which was received with some yawns by Mesdames Latournelle and Dumay, by Gobenheim, and the cashier.

"If you play whist well, monsieur," said Gobenheim, offering him five cards spread out in a fan, "I have never met with so accomplished a gentleman."

The question made every one laugh, for it was the expression of the common wish.

"I play it well enough to be able to end my days in a country town," replied Canalis. "There has, I dare say, been more of literature and conversation than whist players care to have," he added in an impertinent tone, flinging the book on to the side table.

This incident shows what dangers are incurred by the hero of a salon when, like Canalis, he moves outside his orbit; he is then in the case of an actor who is a favorite with one particular public, but whose talent is wasted when he quits his own stage and ventures on to that of a superior theatre.

The Baron and the Duke were partners; Gobenheim played with Latournelle. Modeste sat down at the great poet's elbow, to the despair of Ernest, who marked on the capricious girl's countenance the progress of Canalis' fascination. La Brière had not known the power of seduction possessed by Melchior, and often denied by nature to genuine souls, who are generally shy. This gift demands a boldness and readiness of spirit which might be called the acrobatic agility of the mind;

it even allows of a little part-playing; but is there not, morally speaking, always something of the actor in a poet? There is, indeed, a wide difference between expressing feelings we do not experience though we can imagine them in all their variety, and pretending to have them when they seem necessary to success on the stage of private life; and yet, if the hypocrisy needful to a man of the world has cankered the poet, he easily transfuses the powers of his talent into the expression of the required sentiment, just as a great man who has buried himself in solitude at last finds his heart overflowing into his brain.

"He is playing for millions," thought la Brière in anguish; "and he will act passion so well that Modeste will believe in it!"

And instead of showing himself more delightful and wittier than his rival, la Brière, like the Duc d'Hérouville, sat gloomy, uneasy, and on the watch; but while the courtier was studying the heiress' vagaries, Ernest was a prey to the misery of black and concentrated jealousy, and had not yet won a single glance from his idol. He presently went into the garden for a few minutes with Butscha.

"It is all over, she is crazy about him," said he. "I am worse than disagreeable—and, after all, she is right! Canalis is delightful, he is witty even in his silence, he has passion in his eyes, poetry in his harangues——"

"Is he an honest man?" asked Butscha.

"Oh yes," replied la Brière. "He is loyal, chivalrous, and under Modeste's influence he is quite capable of getting over the little faults he has acquired under Madame de Chaulieu ——"

"You are a good fellow!" exclaimed the little hunchback. "But is he capable of loving—will he love her?"

"I do not know——" replied Ernest. "Has she mentioned me?" he asked after a short silence.

"Yes," said Butscha, and he repeated what Modeste had said about borrowing a disguise.

The young fellow threw himself on a seat and hid his face

in his hands. He could not restrain his tears, and would not let Butscha see them; but the dwarf was the man to guess them.

"What is wrong, monsieur?" said he.

"She is right!" cried la Brière, suddenly sitting up. "I am a wretch."

He told the story of the trick he had been led into by Canalis, explaining to Butscha that he had wished to undeceive Modeste before she had unmasked; and he overflowed in rather childish lamentations over the perversity of his fate. Butscha's sympathy recognized this as love in its most vigorous and youthful artlessness, in its genuine and deep anxiety.

"But why," said he, "do you not make the best of yourself to Mademoiselle Modeste, instead of leaving your rival to prance alone?"

"Ah! you evidently never felt your throat tighten as soon as you tried to speak to her," said la Brière. "Do you not feel a sensation at the roots of your hair, and all over your skin, when she looks at you, even without seeing you?"

"Still you have your wits about you sufficiently to be deeply grieved when she as good as told her father that he was an old woman."

"Monsieur, I love her too truly not to have felt it like a dagger-thrust when I heard her thus belie the perfection I ascribed to her!"

"But Canalis, you see, justified her," replied Butscha.

"If she has more vanity than good feeling, she would not be worth regretting!" said Ernest.

At this moment Modeste came out to breathe the freshness of the starlit night with Canalis, who had been losing at cards, her father, and Madame Dumay. While his daughter walked on with Melchior, Charles Mignon left her and came up to la Brière.

"Your friend ought to have been an advocate, monsieur," said he with a smile, and looking narrowly at the young man.

"Do not be in a hurry to judge a poet with the severity you might exercise on an ordinary man, like me, for instance, Monsieur le Comte," said la Brière. "The poet has his mis-

sion. He is destined by nature to see the poetical side of every question, just as he expresses the poetry of everything; thus when you fancy that he is arguing against himself, he is faithful to his calling. He is a painter ready to represent either a Madonna or a courtesan. Molière is alike right in his pictures of old men and young men, and Molière certainly had a sound judgment. These sports of fancy which corrupt second-rate minds have no influence over the character of really great men."

Charles Mignon pressed the young fellow's hand, saying, "At the same time, this versatility might be used by a man to justify himself for actions diametrically antagonistic, especially in politics."

At this moment Canalis was saying in an insinuating voice, in reply to some saucy remark of Modeste's: "Ah, mademoiselle, never believe that the multiplicity of emotions can in any degree diminish strength of feeling. Poets, more than other men, must love with constancy and truth. In the first place, do not be jealous of what is called 'The Muse.' Happy is the wife of a busy man! If you could but hear the lamentations of the wives who are crushed under the idleness of husbands without employment, or to whom wealth gives much leisure, you would know that the chief happiness of a Parisian woman is liberty, sovereignty in her home. And we poets allow the wife to hold the sceptre, for we cannot possibly condescend to the tyranny exerted by small minds. We have something better to do.—If ever I should marry, which I vow is a very remote disaster in my life, I should wish my wife to enjoy the perfect moral liberty which a mistress always preserves, and which is perhaps the source of all her seductiveness."

Canalis put forth all his spirit and grace in talking of love, marriage, the worship of woman, and arguing with Modeste, till presently Monsieur Mignon, who came to join them, seized a moment's silence to take his daughter by the arm and lead her back to Ernest, whom the worthy Colonel had advised to attempt some explanation.

"Mademoiselle," said Ernest in a broken voice, "I cannot possibly endure to remain here the object of your scorn. I do not defend myself, I make no attempt at justification; I only beg to point out to you that before receiving your flattering letter addressed to the man and not to the poet—your last letter—I desired, and by a letter written at le Havre I intended, to dispel the mistake under which you wrote. All the feelings I have had the honor of expressing to you are sincere. A hope beamed on me when, in Paris, your father told me that he was poor;—but now, if all is lost, if nothing is left to me but eternal regrets, why should I stay where there is nothing for me but torture?—Let me only take away with me one smile from you. It will remain graven on my heart."

"Monsieur," said Modeste, who appeared cold and absent-minded, "I am not the mistress here; but I certainly should deeply regret keeping any one here who should find neither pleasure nor happiness in staying!"

She turned away, and took Madame Dumay's arm to go back into the house. A few minutes later all the personages of this domestic drama, once more united in the drawing-room, were surprised to see Modeste sitting by the Duc d'Hérouville, and flirting with him in the best style of the most wily Parisienne. She watched his play, gave him advice when he asked it, and took opportunities of saying flattering things to him, placing the chance advantage of noble birth on the same level as that of talent or of beauty.

Canalis knew, or fancied he knew, the reason for this caprice: he had tried to pique Modeste by speaking of marriage as a disaster, and seeming to be averse to it; but like all who play with fire, it was he who was burnt. Modeste's pride and disdain alarmed the poet; he came up to her, making a display of jealousy all the more marked because it was assumed. Modeste, as implacable as the angels, relished the pleasure she felt in the exercise of her power, and naturally carried it too far. The Duc d'Hérouville had never been so well treated: a woman smiled on him!

At eleven o'clock, an unheard-of hour at the Chalet, the

three rivals left, the Duke thinking Modeste charming, Canalis regarding her as a coquette, and la Brière heart-broken by her relentlessness.

For a week the heiress still remained to her three admirers just what she had been on that evening, so that the poet seemed to have triumphed, in spite of the whims and freaks which from time to time inspired some hopes in the Duc d'Hérouville. Modeste's irreverence to her father, and the liberties she took with him; her irritability towards her blind mother, as she half-grudgingly did her the little services which formerly had been the delight of her filial affection, seemed to be the outcome of a wayward temper and liveliness tolerated in her childhood. When Modeste went too far she would assert a code of her own, and ascribe her levity and fractiousness to her spirit of independence. She owned to Canalis and the Duke that she hated obedience, and regarded this as an obstacle in the way of marriage, thus sounding her suitors' character after the manner of those who pierce the soil to bring up gold, coal, stone, or water.

"I will never find a husband," said she, the day before that on which the family were to reinstate themselves in the Villa, "who will endure my caprices with such kindness as my father's, which has never failed for an instant, or the indulgence of my adorable mother."

"They know that you love them, mademoiselle," said la Brière.

"Be assured, mademoiselle, that your husband will know the full value of his treasure," added the Duke.

"You have more wit and spirit than are needed to break in a husband," said Canalis, laughing.

Modeste smiled, as Henri IV. may have smiled when, by extracting three answers to an insidious question, he had revealed to some foreign Ambassador the character of his three leading Ministers.

On the day of the dinner, Modeste, led away by her preference for Canalis, walked alone with him for some time up and

down the graveled walk leading from the house to the lawn with its flower-beds. It was easy to perceive, from the poet's gestures and the young heiress' demeanor, that she was lending a favorable ear to Canalis, and the two Demoiselles d'Hérouville came out to interrupt a *tête-à-tête* that scandalized them. With the tact natural to women in such cases, they turned the conversation to the subject of the Court, of the high position conferred by an office under the Crown, explaining the difference subsisting between an appointment to the Household and one held under the Crown; they tried, in fact, to intoxicate Modeste by appealing to her pride, and displaying to her one of the highest positions which a woman at that time could hope to attain.

"To have a Duke in your son," cried the old lady, "is a positive distinction. The mere title is a fortune out of reach of reverses, to bequeath to your children."

"To what ill-fortune," said Canalis, very ill-pleased at this interruption to his conversation, "must we attribute the small success that the Master of the Horse has hitherto achieved in the matter in which that title is supposed to be of most service as supporting a man's pretensions?"

The two unmarried ladies shot a look at Canalis as full of venom as a viper's fangs, but were so put out of countenance by Modeste's sarcastic smile that they had not a word in reply.

"The Master of the Horse," said Modeste to Canalis, "has never blamed you for the diffidence you have learned from your fame; why then grudge him his modesty?"

"Also," said the Duke's aunt, "we have not yet met with a wife worthy of my nephew's rank. Some we have seen who had merely the fortune that might suit the position; others who, without the fortune, had indeed the right spirit; and I must confess that we have done well to wait till God should give us the opportunity of making acquaintance with a young lady in whom should be united both the noble soul and the handsome fortune of a Duchesse d'Hérouville!"

"My dear Modeste," said Hélène d'Hérouville, walking

away a few steps with her new friend, "there are a thousand Barons de Canalis in the kingdom, and a hundred poets in Paris who are as good as he; and he is so far from being a great man, that I, a poor girl, fated to take the veil for lack of a dower, would have nothing to say to him!—And you do not know, I dare say, that he is a man who has, for the last ten years, been at the beck and call of the Duchesse de Chaulieu. Really, none but an old woman of sixty could put up with the endless little ailments with which, it is said, the poet is afflicted, the least of which was unendurable in Louis XVI. Still, the Duchess, of course, does not suffer from them as his wife would; he is not so constantly with her as a husband would be——"

And so by one of the manœuvres peculiar to woman against woman, Hélène d'Hérouville whispered in every ear the calumnies which women, jealous of Madame de Chaulieu, propagated concerning the poet. This trivial detail, not rare in the gossip of young girls, shows that the Comte de la Bastie's fortune was already made the object of ardent rivalry.

Within ten days, opinions at the Chalet had varied considerably about the three men who aspired to Modeste's hand. This change, wholly to the disadvantage of Canalis, was founded on considerations calculated to make the hero of any form of fame reflect deeply. When we see the passion with which an autograph is craved, it is impossible to doubt that public curiosity is strongly excited by celebrity. Most provincials, it is evident, have no very exact idea of the manner in which illustrious persons fasten their cravat, walk on the Boulevard, gape at the crows, or eat a cutlet; for, as soon as they see a man wearing the halo of fashion, or resplendent with popularity—more or less transient, no doubt, but always the object of envy—they are ready to exclaim, "Ah! so that is the thing!" or, "Well, that is odd!" or something equally absurd. In a word, the strange charm that is produced by every form of renown, even when justly acquired, has no permanence. To superficial minds, especially to the sarcastic

and the envious, it is an impression as swift as a lightning-flash, and never repeated. Glory, it would seem, like the sun, is hot and luminous from afar, but, when we get near, it is as cold as the peak of an Alp. Perhaps a man is really great only to his peers; perhaps the defects inherent in the conditions of humanity are more readily lost to their eyes than to those of vulgar admirers. Thus, to be constantly pleasing, a poet would be compelled to display the deceptive graces of those persons who can win forgiveness for their obscurity by amiable manners and agreeable speeches, since, besides genius, the vapid drawing-room virtues and harmless domestic twaddle are exacted from him.

The great poet of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, who refused to yield to this law of society, found that insulting indifference soon took the place of the fascination at first caused by his conversation at evening parties. Cleverness too prodigally displayed produces the same effect on the mind as a shop full of cut glass has on the eyes; this sufficiently explains that Canalis' glitter soon wearied those people who, to use their own words, like something solid. Then, under the necessity of appearing an ordinary man, the poet found many rocks ahead where la Brière could win the good opinion of those who, at first, had thought him sullen. They felt the desire to be revenged on Canalis for his reputation by making more of his friend. The most kindly people are so made. The amiable and unpretentious Referendary shocked nobody's vanity; falling back on him, every one discerned his good heart, his great modesty, the discretion of a strong box, and delightful manners. On political questions the Duc d'Hérouville held Ernest far above Canalis. The poet, as erratic, ambitious, and mutable as Tasso, loved luxury and splendor, and ran into debt; while the young lawyer, even-minded, living prudently, and useful without officiousness, hoped for promotion without asking it, and was saving money meanwhile.

Canalis had indeed justified the good people who were watching him. For the last two or three days he had given

way to fits of irritability, of depression, of melancholy, without any apparent cause—the caprices of temper that come of the nervous poetical temperament. These eccentricities —as they are called in a country town—had their cause in the wrong, which each day made worse, that he was doing to the Duchesse de Chaulieu, to whom he knew he ought to write, without being able to make up his mind to do it; they were anxiously noted by the gentle American and worthy Madame Latournelle, and more than once came under discussion between them and Madame Mignon. Canalis, knowing nothing of these discussions, felt their effect. He was no longer listened to with the same attention, the faces round him did not express the rapture of the first days, while Ernest was beginning to be listened to. For the last two days the poet had, therefore, been bent on captivating Modeste, and seized every moment when he could be alone with her to cast over her the tangles of the most impassioned language. Modeste's heightened color plainly showed the two Demoiselles d'Hérouville with what pleasure the heiress heard insinuating conceits charmingly spoken; and, uneasy at the poet's rapid advances, they had recourse to the *ultima ratio* of women in such predicaments—to calumny, which rarely misses its aim when it appeals to vehement physical repulsion.

As he sat down to dinner, the poet saw a cloud on his idol's brow, and read in it Mademoiselle d'Hérouville's perfidy; so he decided that he must offer himself as a husband to Modeste at the first opportunity he should have of speaking to her. As he and the two noble damsels exchanged some subacid, though polite remarks, Gobenheim nudged Butscha, who sat next to him, to look at the poet and the Master of the Horse.

"They will demolish each other," said he in a whisper.

"Canalis has genius enough to demolish himself unaided," said the dwarf.

In the course of the dinner, which was extremely splendid, and served to perfection, the Duke achieved a great triumph over Canalis. Modeste, whose riding-habit had arrived the evening before, talked of the various rides to be taken in the

neighborhood. In the course of the conversation that ensued she was led to express a strong wish to see a hunt—a pleasure she had never known. The Duke at once proposed to arrange a hunt for Mademoiselle Mignon's benefit in one of the Crown forest-lands a few leagues from le Havre. Thanks to his connection with the Master of the King's Hounds, the Prince de Cadignan, he had it in his power to show Modeste a scene of royal magnificence, to charm her by showing her the dazzling world of a Court, and making her wish to enter it by marriage. The glances exchanged by the Duke and the two Demoiselles d'Hérouville, which Canalis happened to catch, distinctly said, "The heiress is ours!"—enough to urge the poet, who was reduced to mere personal glitter, to secure some pledge of her affection without loss of time.

Modeste, somewhat scared at having gone further than she intended with the d'Hérouvilles, after dinner, when they were walking in the grounds, went forward a little distance in a rather marked manner, accompanied by Melchior. With a young girl's not illegitimate curiosity, she allowed him to guess the calumnies repeated by Hélène, and on a remonstrance from Canalis she pledged him to secrecy, which he promised.

"These lashes of the tongue," said he, "are fair war in the world of fashion; your simplicity is scared by them; for my part, I can laugh at them—nay, I enjoy them. Those ladies must think his lordship's interests seriously imperiled, or they would not have recourse to them."

Then, profiting by the opportunity given by such a piece of information, Canalis justified himself with so much mocking wit, and passion so ingeniously expressed, while thanking Modeste for her confidence, in which he insisted in seeing a slight strain of love, that she found herself quite as deeply compromised towards the poet as she was towards the Duke. Canalis felt that daring was necessary; he declared himself in plain terms. He paid his vows to Modeste in a style through which his poetic fancy shone like a moon in-

geniously staged, with a brilliant picture of herself—beautifully fair, and arrayed to admiration for this family festival. The inspiration so cleverly called up, and encouraged by the complicity of the evening, the grove, the sky, and the earth, led the grasping lover beyond all reason; for he even talked of his disinterestedness, and succeeded by the flowers of his eloquence in giving a new aspect to Diderot's stale theme of *"Five hundred francs and my Sophie,"* or the *"Give me a cottage and your heart!"* of every lover who knows that his father-in-law has a fortune.

"Monsieur," said Modeste, after enjoying the music of this concerto so admirably composed on "a familiar theme," "my parents leave me such freedom as has allowed me to hear you; but you must address yourself to them."

"Well, then," cried Canalis, "only tell me that if I get their consent you will be quite satisfied to obey them."

"I know beforehand," said she, "that my father has some wishes which might offend the legitimate pride of a family as old as yours, for he is bent on transmitting his title and his name to his grandsons."

"Oh, my dear Modeste, what sacrifice would I not make to place my life in the hands of such a guardian angel as you are!"

"You must allow me not to decide my fate for life in one moment," said she, going to join the Demoiselles d'Hérouville.

These two ladies were at that minute flattering little Latournelle's vanity in the hope of securing him to their interests. Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, to whom we must give the family name to distinguish her from her niece Hélène, was conveying to the notary that the place of President of the Court at le Havre, which Charles X. would give to a man recommended by them, was an appointment due to his honesty and talents as a lawyer. Butscha, who was walking with la Brière, in great alarm at Melchior's audacity and rapid progress, found means to speak to Modeste for a few minutes at the bottom of the garden steps as the party went indoors

to give themselves up to the vexations of the inevitable rubber.

"Mademoiselle, I hope you do not yet address him as Melchior," said he in an undertone.

"Not far short of it, my Mysterious Dwarf," she replied, with a smile that might have seduced an angel.

"Good God!" cried the clerk, dropping his hands, which almost touched the steps.

"Well, and is not he as good as that odious gloomy Referendary in whom you take so much interest?" cried she, putting on for Ernest a haughty look of scorn, such as young girls alone have the secret of, as though their maidenhood lent them wings to soar so high. "Would your little Monsieur de la Brière take me without a settlement?" she added after a pause.

"Ask your father," replied Butscha, going a few steps on, so as to lead Modeste to a little distance from the windows. "Listen to me, mademoiselle. You know that I who speak to you am ready to lay down not my life only, but my honor for you, at any time, at any moment. So you can believe in me, you can trust me with things you would not perhaps tell your father.—Well, has that sublime Canalis ever spoken to you in the disinterested way that allows you to cast such a taunt at poor Ernest?"

"Yes."

"And you believe him?"

"That, Malignant Clerk," said she, giving him one of the ten or twelve nicknames she had devised for him, "is, as it seems to me, casting a doubt on the strength of my self-respect."

"You can laugh, dear mademoiselle, so it cannot be serious. I can only hope that you are making a fool of him."

"What would you think of me, Monsieur Butscha, if I thought I had any right to mock at either of the gentlemen who do me the honor to wish for me as a wife? I can tell you, Maître Jean, that even when she appears to scorn the most contemptible admiration, a girl is always flattered at having it offered to her."

"Then I flatter you——?" said the clerk, his face lighting up as a town is illuminated on some great occasion.

"You——?" said she. "You give me the most precious kind of friendship, a feeling as disinterested as that of a mother for her child! Do not compare yourself to any one else, for even my father is obliged to yield to me." She paused. "I cannot tell you that I love you, in the sense men give to the word; but what I feel for you is eternal, and can never know any change."

"Well, then," said Butscha, stooping to pick up a pebble that he might leave a kiss and a tear on the tip of Modeste's shoe, "let me watch over you as a dragon watches over a treasure.—The poet spreads before you just now all the filagree of his elaborate phrases, the tinsel of his promises. He sang of love to the sweetest chord of his lyre no doubt? If when this noble lover is fully assured of your having but a small fortune, you should see his demeanor change; if you then find him cold and embarrassed, will you still make him your husband, still honor him with your esteem?"

"Can he be a Francisque Althor?" she asked, with an expression of the deepest disgust.

"Let me have the pleasure of working this transformation scene," said Butscha. "Not only do I intend that it shall be sudden, but I do not despair of restoring your poet to you afterwards, in love once more, of making him blow hot and cold on your heart with as good a grace as when he argues for and against the same thing in the course of a single evening, sometimes without being aware of it——"

"And if you are right," said she, "whom can I trust?"

"The man who truly loves you."

"The little Duke?"

Butscha looked at Modeste. They both walked on a few steps in silence. The girl was impenetrable; she did not wince.

"Mademoiselle, will you allow me to put into words the thoughts that lurk at the bottom of your heart like watermosses in a pool, and that you refuse to explain to yourself even?"

"Why, indeed!" cried Modeste, "is my privy councillor-in-waiting a mirror too?"

"No, but an echo," he replied, with a little bow stamped with the utmost modesty. "The Duke loves you, but he loves you too well. I, a dwarf, have fully understood the exquisite delicacy of your soul. You would hate to be adored like the holy wafer in a monstrance. But being so eminently a woman, you could no more bear to see a man of whom you were always secure perpetually at your feet, than you could endure an egoist like Canalis, who would always care more for himself than for you. . . . Why? I know not. I would I could be a woman, and an old woman, to learn the reason of the programme I can read in your eyes, which is perhaps that of every girl.

"At the same time, your lofty soul craves for adoration. When a man is at your feet you cannot throw yourself at his. 'But you cannot go far in that way,' Voltaire used to say. So the little Duke has, morally speaking, too many genuflexions, and Canalis not enough—not to say none at all. And I can read the mischief hidden in your smile when you are speaking to the Master of the Horse, when he speaks to you and you reply. You would never be unhappy with the Duke; everybody would be pleased if you chose him for your husband; but you would not love him. The coldness of egoism and the excessive fervor of perennial raptures no doubt have a negative effect on the heart of every woman.

"Obviously this is not the perpetual triumph that you would enjoy in the infinite delights of such a marriage as that you dream of, in which you would find a submission to be proud of, great little sacrifices that are gladly unconfessed, successes looked forward to with rapture, and unforeseen magnanimity to which it is a joy to yield; in which a woman finds herself understood even to her deepest secrets, while her love is sometimes a protection to her protector——"

"You are a wizard!" cried Modeste.

"Nor will you meet with that enchanting equality of feeling, that constant sharing of life, and that certainty of giving

happiness which makes marriage acceptable, if you marry a Canalis, a man who thinks only of himself, to whom *I* is the only note in the scale, and whose attention has not yet condescended so low as to listen to your father or the Duke. An ambitious man, not of the first class, to whom your dignity and supremacy matter little, who will treat you as a necessary chattel in the house, who insults you already by his indifference on points of honor. Yes, if you allowed yourself to go so far as to slap your mother, Canalis would shut his eyes that he might not see your guilt, so hungry is he for your fortune!

"So, mademoiselle, I was not thinking of the great poet, who is but a little actor, nor of my lord Duke, who would be for you a splendid match, but not a husband——"

"Butscha, my heart is a blank page on which you yourself write what you read," replied Modeste. "You are carried away by your provincial hatred of everything that compels you to look above your head. You cannot forgive the poet for being a political man, for having an eloquent tongue, and a splendid future; you calumniate his purpose——"

"His, mademoiselle! He would turn his back on you within twenty-four hours with the meanness of a Vilquin."

"Well, make him play such a farcical scene, and——"

"Ay, and in every key; in three days—on Wednesday—do not forget. Until then, mademoiselle, amuse yourself by making the musical box play all its airs, that the vile discords of the antiphony may come out all the more clearly."

Modeste gaily returned to the drawing-room, where of all the men present, la Brière alone, seated in the recess of a window—whence, no doubt, he had been looking at his idol—rose at her entrance, as if an usher had shouted, "The Queen!" It was a respectful impulse, full of the eloquence peculiar to action, which surpasses that of the finest speech. Spoken love is not to be compared with love in action—every girl of twenty is fifty as concerns this axiom; this is the seducer's strongest argument.

Instead of looking Modeste in the face, as Canalis did, bow-

ing to her as an act of public homage, the disdained lover watched her with a slow side glance, as humble as Butscha's, almost timid. The young heiress observed this demeanor as she went to place herself by Canalis, in whose game she affected an interest. In the course of the conversation, la Brière learned, from a remark she made to her father, that Modeste intended to begin riding again on the following Wednesday, and she mentioned that she had no riding-whip suitable to match with her handsome new habit. Ernest flashed a glance at the dwarf like a spark of fire, and a few minutes later they were walking together on the terrace.

"It is now nine o'clock," said la Brière. "I am off to Paris as fast as my horse will carry me. I can be there by ten to-morrow morning. My dear Butscha, from you she will accept a gift with pleasure, for she has a great regard for you; let me give her a riding-whip in your name; and, believe me, in return for such an immense favor you have in me not indeed a friend, but a slave!"

"Go; you are happy," said the clerk. "You have money."

"Tell Canalis from me that I shall not be in to-night, and that he must invent some excuse for my absence for two days."

An hour later Ernest had set out on horseback for Paris, where he arrived after twelve hours' riding, his first care being to secure a place in the mail coach for le Havre on the following day. He then went to the three first jewelers in Paris, comparing handles of riding-whips, and seeking what art could produce of the most royal perfection. He found one made by Stidmann for a Russian lady, who, after ordering it, had been unable to pay for it—a fox-hunt wrought in gold, with a ruby at the top, and exorbitantly expensive as compared with a Referendary's stipend; all his savings were swallowed up, amounting to seven thousand francs. Ernest gave a sketch of the arms of la Bastie, allowing twenty hours for them to be engraved instead of those that were on it. This handle, a masterpiece of workmanship, was fitted to an india-rubber whip, and placed in a red morocco case, lined with velvet, with a monogram of two M's on the top.

By Wednesday morning la Brière had returned by the mail, in time to breakfast with Canalis. The poet had explained his secretary's absence by saying that he was busy with some work forwarded from Paris. Butscha who had gone to the coach office to hold out a welcoming hand to Ernest on the arrival of the mail, flew to give this work of art to Françoise Cochet, desiring her to place it on Modeste's dressing-table.

"You are going out riding, no doubt, with Mademoiselle Modeste," said Butscha, on returning to Canalis' villa to inform Ernest, by a side glance, that the whip had safely reached its destination.

"I!" said la Brière. "I am going to bed."

"Well!" exclaimed Canalis, looking at his friend, "I do not understand you at all."

Breakfast was ready, and the poet naturally invited the clerk to sit down with them. Butscha had stayed, intending to get himself invited if necessary by la Brière, seeing on Germain's countenance the success of a hunchback's trick, of which his promise to Modeste may have given a hint.

"Monsieur was very wise to keep Monsieur Latournelle's clerk," said Germain in his master's ear. Canalis and Germain, on a hint from the latter, passed into the drawing-room. "This morning I went out to see some fishing, an expedition to which I was invited the day before yesterday by the owner of a boat I have made acquaintance with."

Germain did not confess that he had had such bad taste as to play billiards in a café in le Havre, where Butscha had surrounded him with a number of his friends in order to be able to work upon him.

"What then?" said Canalis. "Come to the point, and at once."

"Monsieur le Baron, I heard a discussion about Monsieur Mignon, which I did my best to keep going—no one knew who I lived with. I tell you, Monsieur le Baron, everybody in le Havre says that you are running your head against a wall. Mademoiselle de la Bastie's fortune is, like her name, very modest. The ship on which the father came home is not

his own; it belongs to some China merchants, with whom he has to settle, and things are said about it that are far from flattering to the Colonel.—Having heard that you and Monsieur le Duc were rivals for Mademoiselle de la Bastie, I take the liberty of mentioning it; for, between you and him, it is better that his lordship should swallow the bait. On my way back I took a turn on the quay, past the theatre, where the merchants walk up and down, and I pushed my way boldly among them. These worthy folks, seeing a well-dressed man, began to talk about the affairs of the town; from one thing to another I led them to speak of Colonel Mignon; and they were so much of the same mind as the fishermen that I felt it my duty to speak. That is why I left you, sir, to get up and dress alone . . ."

"What is to be done?" cried Canalis, feeling that he was too deeply pledged to withdraw from his promises to Modeste.

"You know my attachment to you, sir," said Germain, seeing that the poet was thunderstruck, "and you will not be surprised if I offer a piece of advice. If you can make this clerk drunk, he will let the cat out of the bag, and if he won't open his mouth for two bottles of champagne, he certainly will for the third. It would be a strange thing, too, if monsieur, who will certainly be an ambassador one day, for Philoxène heard Madame la Duchesse say so,—if you, sir, cannot get round a country lawyer's clerk."

At this moment Butscha, the unknown author of this fishing expedition, was begging the Referendary to say nothing about his journey to Paris, and not to interfere with his manœuvres at breakfast. Butscha meant to take advantage of a reaction of feeling unfavorable to Charles Mignon, which had set in at le Havre.

This was the cause of this reaction. Monsieur le Comte de la Bastie had entirely ignored those of his former friends who, during his absence, had neglected his wife and children. On hearing that a dinner was to be given at the Villa Mignon, each one flattered himself he would be among the guests, and expected an invitation; but when it was known that only

Gobenheim, the Latournelles, the Duke, and the two Parisians were to be asked, there was a loud outcry at the merchant's arrogance; his marked avoidance of seeing anybody, and of ever going down to le Havre, was commented on, and attributed to scorn, on which the whole town avenged itself by casting doubts on Mignon's sudden wealth. By dint of gossip everybody soon ascertained that the money advanced to Vilquin on the Villa had been found by Dumay. This fact gave the most malignant persons grounds for the libelous supposition that Charles had confided to Dumay's known devotion the funds concerning which he anticipated litigation on the part of his so-called partners in Canton. Charles' reticence, for his constant aim was to conceal his wealth, and the gossip of his servants, who had been put on their guard, lent an appearance of truth to these monstrous fables, believed by all who were governed by the spirit of detraction that animates rival traders. In proportion as parochial pride had formerly cried up his immense fortune as one of the makers of le Havre, so now provincial jealousy cast doubt on it.

Butscha, to whom the fishermen of the port owed more than one good turn, desired them to be secret, and to cram their new friend. He was well served. The owner of the boat told Germain that a cousin of his, a sailor, was coming from Marseilles, having just been paid off in consequence of the sale of the brig in which the Colonel had come home. The vessel was being sold by order of one Castagnould, and the cargo—according to the cousin—was worth only three or four hundred thousand francs at most.

"Germain," said Canalis, as the servant was leaving the room, "bring us up some Champagne and some Bordeaux. A member of the legal faculty of Normandy must carry away some memories of a poet's hospitality.—And he has the wit of *le Figaro*," added Canalis, laying his hand on the dwarf's shoulder; "that *petit-journal* brilliancy must be made to sparkle and foam with the wine of Champagne; we will not spare ourselves either, Ernest! Why, it is two years at least since I last got tipsy," he added, turning to la Brière.

"With wine?—That I can quite understand," replied the clerk. "You get tipsy with yourself every day! In the matter of praise, you drink your fill. You are handsome; you are famous during your lifetime; your conversation is on a level with your genius; and you fascinate all the women, even my master's wife. Loved as you are by the most beautiful Sultana Valideh I ever saw—it is true, I have never seen another—you can, if you choose, marry Mademoiselle de la Bastie.—Why, merely with making this inventory of your present advantages, to say nothing of the future—a fine title, a peerage, an embassy!—I am quite fuddled, like the men who bottle wine for other people to drink."

"All this social magnificence is nothing," replied Canalis, "without that which gives them value—a fortune! Here we are men among men; fine sentiments are delightful in stanzas."

"And in certain circum*stanzas,*" said Butscha, with a significant smile.

"You, a master of the mystery of settlements," said the poet, smiling at the pun, "must know as well as I do that cottage rhymes to nothing better than pottage."

At table Butscha played with signal success the part of le Rigaudin in *la Maison en loterie,* alarming Ernest, to whom the jests of a lawyer's office were unfamiliar; they are a match for those of the studio. The clerk repeated all the scandal of le Havre, the history of every fortune, of every boudoir, and of all the crimes committed just outside of the pale of the law, what is called sailing as close hauled as possible (in Normandy, *se tirer d'affaire comme on peut*). He spared no one, and his spirits rose with the stream of wine he poured down his throat like storm water through a gutter.

"Do you know, la Brière," said Canalis, filling up Butscha's glass, "that this brave boy would be a first-rate secretary to an Ambassador?"

"And cut out his master!" retorted the dwarf with a look at Canalis, of insolence redeemed by the sparkle of carbonic acid gas. "I have enough spirit of intrigue and little enough

gratitude to climb on to your shoulders. A poet supporting an abortion!—Well, it has been seen, and pretty frequently—in libraries. Why, you are staring at me as if I were swallowing swords. Heh! my dear, great genius, you are a very superior man; you know full well that gratitude is a word for idiots; it is to be found in the dictionary, but not in the human heart. I O U is a formula unhonored on the green banks of Parnassus or Pindus. Do you suppose I feel the debt to my master's wife for having brought me up? Why, the whole town has paid it off in esteem, praise, and admiration, the most precious of all coin. I do not see the virtue that is merely an investment for the benefit of one's vanity. Men make a trade of reciprocal services; the word gratitude represents the debit side, that is all.

"As to intrigue, I adore it!—What!" he went on, in reply to a gesture from Canalis, "do you not delight in the faculty which enables a crafty man to get the upper hand of a man of genius, which requires constant observation of the vices and weaknesses of our betters, and a sense of the nick of time for everything? Ask diplomacy whether the triumph of cunning over strength is not the most delightful success there is. If I were your secretary, Monsieur le Baron, you would soon be Prime Minister, because it would be to my interest!—Now, would you like a sample of my little talents of that kind? Hearken! You love Mademoiselle Modeste to distraction, and you are very right. In my opinion, the girl is a genuine Parisienne, for here and there a Parisienne sprouts in the country. Our Modeste would be a wife to push a man. She has that sort of thing," said he, giving his hand a twirl in the air. "You have a formidable rival in the Duke. Now, what will you give me to pack him off within three days?"

"Let us finish this bottle," said the poet, refilling Butscha's glass.

"You will make me drunk!" said the clerk, swallowing down his ninth glass of champagne. "Is there a bed where I may sleep for an hour? My master is as sober as a camel, the old fox, and Madame Latournelle too. They would both

be hard upon me, and they would have good reason, while I should have lost mine, and I have some work to do."

Then going back to a former subject without any transition, after the manner of a man when he is screwed, he exclaimed:

"And then, what a memory I have! It is a match for my gratitude."

"Butscha!" exclaimed the poet, "just now you said that you had no gratitude; you are contradicting yourself."

"Not at all," said the clerk. "Forgetting almost always means remembering!—Now, then, on we go! I am made to be a secretary."

"And now will you set to work to get rid of the Duke?" asked Canalis, charmed to find the conversation tending naturally to the subjects he aimed at.

"That—is no concern of yours," said Butscha, with a tremendous hiccup.

Butscha rolled his head on his shoulders, and his eyes from Germain to la Brière, and from la Brière to Canalis, in the manner of a man who feels intoxication creeping over him, and wants to know in what esteem he is held; for in the wreck of drunkenness it may be noted that self-esteem is the last sentiment to float.

"Look here, great poet, you are a jolly fellow, you are. Do you take me for one of your readers, you who sent your friend to Paris to procure information concerning the house of Mignon. I humbug, you humbug, we humbug. Well and good; but do me the honor to believe that I am clear-headed enough always to keep as much conscience as I need in my sphere of life. As head clerk to Maître Latournelle my heart is a padlocked despatch-box, my lips never breathe a word of any paper concerning the clients. I know everything, and I know nothing. And then, passion is no secret: I love Modeste, she is a pupil of mine, she must marry well; and I could get round the Duke if necessary. But you are going to marry——"

"Germain, coffee and liqueurs," said Canalis.

"Liqueurs?" repeated Butscha, holding up a forbidding

hand like a too knowing maiden putting aside some little temptation. "Oh, my poor work! By the way, there is a marriage contract to be drawn up, and my second clerk is as stupid as a matrimonial bargain, and quite capable of p-p-poking a penknife through the bride's personal property. He thinks himself a fine fellow because he measures nearly six feet —the idiot!"

"Here, this is Crème de Thé, a West Indian liqueur," said Canalis.—"You who are Mademoiselle Modeste's adviser——"

"Her adviser?——"

"Well, do you think she loves me?"

"Ye-e-es, more than she loves the Duke," drawled the dwarf, rousing himself from a sort of torpor, which he acted to admiration. "She loves you for your disinterestedness. She told me that for you she felt equal to the greatest sacrifices, to giving up dress, spending only a thousand francs a year, devoting her life to prove to you that in marrying her you would have done a stroke of business. And she is devilish honest (hiccup), I can tell you, and well informed; there is nothing that girl does not know."

"That and three hundred thousand francs," said Canalis.

"Oh! there may be as much as you say," replied the clerk with enthusiasm. "Mignon Papa—and you see he is really a Mignon, a dear papa, that's what I like him for—to marry his only daughter—well, he would strip himself of everything. The Colonel has been accustomed under your Restoration to live on half-pay (hiccup), and he will be quite happy living with Dumay, speculating in a small way at le Havre; he will be sure to give the child his three hundred thousand francs.—Then we must not forget Dumay, who means to leave his fortune to Modeste. Dumay, you know, is a Breton; his birth gives security to the bargain; he never changes his mind, and his fortune is quite equal to his master's. At the same time, since they listen to me at least as much as to you, though I do not talk so much nor so well, I said to them, 'You are putting too much money into your house; if Vilquin leaves it on your hands, there are two hun-

dred thousand francs that will bring you no return. There will be only a hundred thousand francs left to turn over, and that, in my opinion, is not enough.'—At this moment the Colonel and Dumay are talking it over. Take my word for it, Modeste is rich. The people of the town talk nonsense, they are envious. Why, who in the department has such a portion?" said Butscha, holding up his fingers to count. "Two to three hundred thousand francs in hard cash!" said he, folding down his left thumb with the forefinger of his right hand. "That is for one. The freehold of the Villa Mignon," and he doubled down his left forefinger, "for two; Dumay's fortune for three," he added, ticking it off on the middle finger. "Why, little Mother Modeste is a lady with six hundred thousand francs of her own when the two old soldiers shall have gone aloft to take further orders from God A'mighty."

This blunt and artless communication, broken by sips of liqueur, sobered Canalis as much as it seemed to intoxicate Butscha. To the lawyer's clerk, a mere provincial, this fortune was evidently colossal. He let his head drop on the palm of his right hand, and with the elbow majestically resting on the table, he sat blinking and talking to himself: "In twenty years, at the pace the Code is taking us, melting down fortunes by the process of subdivision, an heiress with six hundred thousand francs will be as rare as disinterestedness in a money-lender. You may say that Modeste will spend at least twelve thousand francs a year, the interest of her fortune; but she is a very nice girl—very nice—very nice. She is as you may say—a poet must have imagery—she is an ermine as knowing as a monkey."

"And what did you tell me?" cried Canalis in an undertone to la Brière. "That she had six millions?"

"My dear fellow," said Ernest, "allow me to remark that I could say nothing. I am bound by an oath, and it is perhaps saying more than I ought to tell you——"

"An oath? and to whom?"

"To Monsieur Mignon."

"Why, Ernest! when you know how indispensable fortune is

to me"—Butscha was snoring—"you who know my position, and all I should lose in the Rue de Grenelle by marrying—you would have coolly allowed me to plunge in?" said Canalis, turning pale. "But this is a matter between friends; and our friendship, my boy, is a compact of a far older date than this that the wily Provençal has required of you."

"My dear fellow," said Ernest, "I love Modeste too well to——"

"Idiot, take her!" cried the poet. "So break your oath——"

"Do you solemnly promise, on your honor as a man, to forget what I tell you, and to be just the same to me as though I had never confided to you, come what may?"

"I swear it by the sacred memory of my mother!"

"Well, when I was in Paris, Monsieur Mignon told me that he was very far from having such a colossal fortune as the Mongenods had spoken of. The Colonel intends to give his daughter two hundred thousand francs. But then, Melchior, was the father suspicious? or was he sincere? It is no concern of mine to solve that question. If she should condescend to choose me, Modeste, with nothing, should be my wife."

"A blue-stocking, appallingly learned, who has read everything and knows everything—in theory," cried Canalis, in reply to a protesting gesture of la Brière's; "a spoilt child, brought up in luxury during her early years, and weaned from it for the last five! Oh, my poor friend, pause, consider——"

"Ode and Code!" said Butscha, rousing himself. "You go in for the Ode, and I for the Code; there is only a C between. Code, from coda, a tail! You have treated me handsomely, and I like you—don't have anything to do with the Code.—Listen; a piece of good advice is not a bad return for your wine and your Crème de Thé. Old Mignon is cream too, the cream of good fellows. Well, trot out your horse, he is riding out with his daughter; you can speak frankly to him; ask him about her marriage portion; he will give you a plain answer,

and you will see to the bottom of things as sure as I am tipsy, and you are a great man; but then there must be no mistake, we leave le Havre together, I suppose? I am to be your secretary, since this little chap, who thinks I am drunk, and is laughing at me, is going to leave you.—Go ahead. March! —and leave him to marry the girl."

Canalis went to dress.

"Not a word; he is rushing on suicide," said Butscha, as cool as Gobenheim, to la Brière, very quietly; and he telegraphed behind Canalis a signal of scorn familiar to the Paris street boy. "Good-bye, Master," he went on at the top of his voice, "may I go and get forty winks in Madame Amaury's summer-house?"

"Make yourself at home," replied the poet.

The clerk, loudly laughed at by Canalis' three servants, made his way to the summer-house, plunging into flower-beds and baskets with the perverse grace of an insect describing its endless zigzags as it tries to escape through a closed window. He scrambled up into the gazebo, and when the servants had got indoors, he sat down on a wooden bench and gave himself up to the joys of triumph. He had fooled the superior man; not only had he snatched off his mask, but he had seen him untie the strings, and he laughed as an author laughs at his piece, with a full appreciation of the value of this *vis comica*.

"Men are tops!" cried he; "you have only to find the end of the string that is wound round them. Why, any one could make me faint away by simply saying, 'Mademoiselle Modeste has fallen off her horse and broken her leg.' "

A few minutes later, Modeste, wearing a bewitching habit of dark-green kerseymere, a little hat with a green veil, doeskin gloves, and velvet boots, over which the lace frills of her drawers fell gracefully, had mounted her handsomely-saddled pony, and was showing to her father and the Duc d'Hérouville the pretty gift she had just received; she was delighted with it, seeing in it one of those attentions which most flatter a woman.

"Was it you, Monsieur le Duc?" said she, holding out the sparkling end of her whip. "There was a card on it with the words, 'Guess if you can,' and a row of dots. Françoise and Madame Dumay ascribe this charming surprise to Butscha; but my dear Butscha is not rich enough to pay for such fine rubies! And my father, on my saying on Sunday evening that I had no whip, sent for that one from Rouen."

Modeste pointed to a whip in her father's hand with a handle set closely with turquoises, a fashionable novelty then, but now rather common.

"I only wish, mademoiselle—I would give ten years of my life to have the right of offering such a magnificent jewel," replied the Duke politely.

"Ah! then here is the audacious man," cried Modeste, seeing Canalis come up on horseback. "None but a poet can find such exquisite things.—Monsieur," she went on to Melchior, "my father will be angry with you; you are justifying those who blame you for your extravagance."

"Hah!" cried Canalis simply, "then that is what took la Brière from le Havre to Paris as fast as he could ride."

"Your secretary took such a liberty!" said Modeste, turning pale, and flinging the whip to Françoise Cochet with a vehemence expressive of the deepest contempt. "Give me back that whip, father!"

"The poor boy is lying on his bed broken with fatigue!" Melchior went on, as they followed the girl, who had gone off at a gallop. "You are hard, mademoiselle. 'I have this chance alone of reminding her of my existence,' was what he said."

"And could you esteem a woman who was capable of preserving keepsakes from every comer?" said Modeste.

Modeste, who was surprised at receiving no reply from Canalis, ascribed his inattention to the sound of the horse's hoofs.

"How you delight in tormenting those who are in love with you!" said the Duke. "Your pride and dignity so entirely belie your vagaries that I am beginning to suspect that you do

yourself injustice by deliberately planning your malicious tricks."

"What! you have just discovered that, Monsieur le Duc?" said she, with a laugh. "You have exactly as much insight as a husband!"

For about a kilometre they rode on in silence. Modeste was surprised at being no longer aware of the flaming glances of Canalis, whose admiration for the beauties of the landscape seemed rather more than was natural. On the preceding evening Modeste had pointed out to the poet a beautiful effect of color in the sunset over the sea, and, finding him as speechless as a mute, had said:

"Well, do not you see it all?"

"I see nothing but your hand," he had replied.

"Does Monsieur de la Brière know how to ride?" Modeste asked, to pique him.

"He is not a very good horseman, but he goes," replied the poet, as cold as Gobenheim had been before the Colonel's return.

As they went along a cross-road, down which Monsieur Mignon turned to go through a pretty valley to a hill overlooking the course of the Seine, Canalis let Modeste and the Duke go forward, slackening his speed so as to bring his horse side by side with the Colonel's.

"Monsieur le Comte," said he, "you are a frank soldier, so you will regard my openness as a claim to your esteem. When an offer of marriage, with all the too barbarous, or, if you will, too civilized discussions to which it gives rise, is made through a third person, everyone suffers. You and I are both men of perfect discretion, and you, like me, are past the age for surprises, so let us speak as man to man.—I will set the example. I am nine-and-twenty, I have no landed estate, I am an ambitious man. That I ardently admire Mademoiselle Modeste you must have seen. Now, in spite of the faults your charming daughter delights in affecting——"

"To say nothing of those she really has," said the Colonel, smiling.

"I should be glad indeed to make her my wife, and I believe I could make her happy. The whole question of my future life turns on the point of fortune. Every girl who is open to marriage must be loved whatever comes of it; at the same time, you are not the man to get rid of your dear Modeste without a portion, and my position would no more allow of my marrying 'for love,' as the phrase is, than of proposing to a girl without a fortune at least equal to my own. My salary, and some sinecures, with what I get from the Academy and my writings, come to about thirty thousand francs a year, a fine income for a bachelor. If my wife and I between us have sixty thousand francs a year, I could continue to live on much the same footing as at present. Have you a million francs to give Mademoiselle Modeste?"

"Oh! monsieur, we are very far from any agreement," said the Colonel jesuitically.

"Well, then, we have said nothing about the matter—only whistled," said Canalis anxiously. "You will be quite satisfied with my conduct, Monsieur le Comte; I shall be one more of the unfortunate men crushed by that charming young lady. Give me your word that you will say nothing of this to anybody, not even to Mademoiselle Modeste; for," he added, by way of consolation, "some change might occur in my position which would allow of my asking her hand without a settlement."

"I swear it," said the Colonel. "You know, monsieur, with what exaggerated language the public, in the provinces as in Paris, talk of fortunes made and lost. Success and failure are alike magnified, and we are never so lucky or so unlucky as report says. In business there is no real security but investment in land when cash transactions are settled. I am awaiting with anxious impatience the reports of my various agents; nothing is as yet concluded—neither the sale of my merchandise and my ship, nor my account with China. I shall not for the next ten months know the amount of my capital. However, in Paris, when talking to Monsieur de la Brière, I guaranteed a settlement on my daughter of two

hundred thousand francs in money down. I intend to purchase a landed estate and settle it in tail on my grandchildren, obtaining for them a grant of my titles and coat-of-arms."

After the first words of this speech Canalis had ceased to listen.

The four riders now came out on a wide road and rode abreast up to the plateau, which commands a view of the rich valley of the Seine towards Rouen, while on the other horizon they could still see the line of the sea.

"Butscha was indeed right, God is a great landscape maker," said Canalis, as he looked down on the panorama, unique among those for which the hills above the Seine are justly famous.

"But it is when out hunting, my dear Baron," said the Duke, "when nature is roused by a voice, by a stir in the silence, that the scenery, as we fly past, seems most really sublime with the rapid change of effect."

"The sun has an inexhaustible palette," said Modeste, gazing at the poet in a sort of bewilderment. On her making a remark as to the absence of mind she observed in Canalis, he replied that he was reveling in his own thoughts, an excuse which writers can make in addition to those common to other men.

"Are we really blest when we transfer our life to the centre of the world, and add to it a thousand factitious needs and over-wrought vanities?" said Modeste, as she contemplated the calm and luxuriant champaign which seemed to counsel philosophical quietude.

"Such bucolics, mademoiselle, are always written on tables of gold," said the poet.

"And imagined, perhaps, in a garret," replied the Colonel.

Modeste gave Canalis a piercing look, and saw him flinch; there was a sound of bells in her ears; for a moment everything grew dark before her; then, in a hard, cold tone, she exclaimed:

"Ah! it is Wednesday!"

"It is not with the idea of flattering a merely transient

fancy of yours, mademoiselle," said the Duc d'Hérouville solemnly—for this little scene, so tragical to Modeste, had given him time for thought—"but, I assure you, I am so utterly disgusted with the world, the Court, and Paris life, that, for my part, with a Duchesse d'Hérouville so full of charms and wit as you are, I could pledge myself to live like a philosopher in my château, doing good to those about me, reclaiming my alluvial flats, bringing up my children——"

"This shall be set down to your credit, Duke," said Modeste, looking steadily at the noble gentleman. "You flatter me," she added, "for you do not think me frivolous, and you believe that I have enough resources in myself to live in solitude.—And that perhaps will be my fate," she added, looking at Canalis with a compassionate expression.

"It is the lot of all small fortunes," replied the poet. "Paris requires Babylonian luxury. I sometimes wonder how I have managed to live till now."

"The King is Providence to you and me," said the Duke frankly, "for we both live on His Majesty's bounty. If, since the death of Monsieur le Grand, as Cinq-Mars was called, we had not always held his office in our family, we should have had to sell Hérouville to be demolished by the *Bande Noire*. Believe me, mademoiselle, it is to me a terrible humiliation to mix up financial considerations with the thought of marriage——"

The candor of this avowal, which came from the heart, and the sincerity of this regret, touched Modeste.

"In these days," said the poet, "nobody in France, Monsieur le Duc, is rich enough to commit the folly of marrying a woman for her personal merits, her charm, her character, or her beauty——"

The Colonel looked at Canalis with a strange expression, after studying his daughter, whose face no longer expressed any astonishment.

"Then for a man of honor," he said, "it is a noble use of riches to devote them to repair the ravages that time has wrought on our old historical families."

"Yes, papa," said the girl gravely.

The Colonel asked the Duke and Canalis to dine at the villa, without ceremony, in their riding dress, and set them the example by not changing his for dinner. When, on their return, Modeste went to change her dress, she looked curiously at the trinket that had come from Paris, and that she had so cruelly disdained.

"How exquisitely such work is done nowadays," said she to Françoise Cochet, who was now her maid.

"And that poor young gentleman, mademoiselle, ill of a fever——"

"Who told you so?"

"Monsieur Butscha. He came here just now to bid me say you had no doubt found out that he had kept his word on the day he named."

Modeste went downstairs, dressed with queenly simplicity.

"My dear father," said she, quite audibly, taking the Colonel's arm, "will you go and ask after Monsieur de la Brière, and oblige me by taking back his present. You may put it to him that my small fortune, as well as my own taste, prohibits my using such toys as are fit only for a queen or a courtesan. Besides, I can only accept presents from the man I may hope to marry. Beg our excellent young friend to keep the whip till you find yourself rich enough to buy it of him."

"Then my little girl is full of good sense!" said the Colonel, kissing her on the forehead.

Canalis took advantage of a conversation between the Duc d'Hérouville and Madame Mignon to go out on the terrace, where Modeste presently joined him, urged by curiosity, while he believed it was by her desire to become Madame Canalis. Somewhat alarmed at his own audacity in thus executing what a soldier would call "right about face," though, according to the jurisprudence of ambitious souls, every man in his place would have done the same, and just as suddenly, he tried to find some plausible reasons as he saw the ill-starred Modeste come out to him.

"Dear Modeste," said he, in insinuating tones, "as we are

on such terms of friendship, will you be offended if I point out to you how painful your replies with regard to Monsieur d'Hérouville must be to a man who loves you, and, above all, to a poet, whose soul is a woman, is all nerves, and suffering from the myriad jealousies of a genuine passion. I should be a poor diplomate indeed if I had not understood that your preliminary flirtations, your elaborate recklessness, were the outcome of a plan to study our characters——"

Modeste raised her head with a quick, intelligent, and pretty movement, of a type that may perhaps be traced to certain animals to which instinct gives wonderful grace.

"And so, thrown back on myself, I was no longer deceived by them. I marveled at your subtle wit, in harmony with your character and your countenance. Be satisfied that I never imagined your assumed duplicity to be anything but an outer wrapper, covering the most adorable candor. No, your intelligence, your learning, have left untainted the exquisite innocence we look for in a wife. You are the very wife for a poet, a diplomatist, a thinker, a man fated to live through hazardous moments, and I admire you as much as I feel attached to you. I entreat you, unless you were merely playing with me yesterday when you accepted the pledges of a man whose vanity will turn to pride if he is chosen by you, whose faults will turn to virtues at your divine touch—I beseech you, do not crush the feeling he has indulged till it is a vice!

"Jealousy in me is a solvent, and you have shown me what its violence is; it is fearful; it eats into everything! Oh! it is not the jealousy of Othello!" said he, in reply to a movement on Modeste's part. "No, no! I myself am in question; I am spoilt in this regard. You know of the one affection to which I owe the only form of happiness I have ever known—and that very incomplete (he shook his head).

"Love is depicted as a child by every nation, because it cannot be conceived of but as having all life before it. Well, this love of mine had its term fixed by nature; it was still-born. The most intuitive motherliness discerned and soothed this aching spot in my heart, for a woman who feels—who sees—

that she is dying to the joys of love, has angelic consideration; the duchess has never given me a pang of that kind. In ten years not a word, not a look, has failed of its mark. I attach more importance than ordinary people do to words, thoughts, and looks. To me a glance is an infinite possession, the slightest doubt is a mortal poison, and acts instantaneously: I cease to love. In my opinion—which is opposed to that of the vulgar, who revel in trembling, hoping, waiting—love ought to dwell in absolute assurance, childlike, infinite. To me the enchanting purgatory which women delight in inflicting on us with their caprices is an intolerable form of happiness which I will have nothing to say to; to me, love is heaven or hell. Hell I will not have; I feel that I am strong enough to endure the sempiternal blue of Paradise. I give myself unreservedly, I will have no secrets, no doubts, no delusions, in my future life, and I ask for reciprocity. Perhaps I offend you by doubting you! But, remember, I am speaking only of myself——"

"And a great deal," said Modeste, hurt by all the lancet points of this harangue, in which the Duchesse de Chaulieu was used as a sledge-hammer, "but it can never be too much; I have a habit of admiring you, my dear poet."

"Well, then, can you promise me the dog-like fidelity I offer you? Is it not fine? Is it not what you wish for?"

"But why, my dear poet, do you not look for a wife who is dumb and blind and something of a fool? I am quite prepared to please my husband in all things; but you threaten to deprive a girl of the very happiness you promise her, to snatch it from her at the slightest movement, the slightest word, the slightest look! You cut the bird's wings and want to see it fly! I knew that poets were accused of inconsistency —Oh! quite unjustly," she added, as Canalis protested by a gesture, "for the supposed fault is merely the result of a vulgar misapprehension of the suddenness of their impulses. Still, I had not thought that a man of genius would devise the contradictory conditions of such a game, and then call it life! You insist on impossibilities just to have the pleasure

of putting me in the wrong, like those enchanters who in fairy tales set tasks to persecuted damsels whom good fairies rescue——"

"In this case true love will be the fairy," said Canalis, rather drily, seeing that his motive for a separation had been detected by the acute and delicate intelligence which Butscha had put on the scent.

"You, at this moment, my dear poet, are like those parents who inquire as to a girl's fortune before mentioning what their son's will be. You make difficulties with me, not knowing whether you have any right to do so. Love cannot be based on agreements discussed in cold blood. The poor Duke allows himself to be managed with all the submissiveness of Uncle Toby in Sterne's novel, with this difference, that I am not the widow Wadman, though bereaved at this moment of many illusions concerning poetry.—Yes! we hate to believe anything, we girls, that can overthrow our world of fancy!—I had been told all this beforehand!—Oh! you are trying to quarrel with me in a way unworthy of you! I cannot recognize the Melchior of yesterday."

"Because Melchior has detected in you an ambition you still cherish——"

Modeste looked at Canalis from head to foot with an imperial glance.

"But I shall some day be an ambassador and a peer as he is——"

"You take me for a vulgar schoolgirl!" she said, as she went up the steps. But she turned hastily, and added in some confusion, for she felt suffocating:

"That is less insolent than taking me for a fool. The change in your demeanor is due to the nonsense current in le Havre, which Françoise, my maid, has just repeated to me."

"Oh, Modeste, can you believe that?" cried Canalis, with theatrical emphasis. "Then you think that I want to marry you only for your fortune!"

"If I do you this injustice after your edifying remarks on the hills by the Seine, it lies with you to undeceive me, and

thenceforth I will be what you would wish me to be," said she, blighting him with her scorn.

"If you think you can catch me in that trap, my lady," said the poet to himself as he followed her, "you fancy me younger than I am. What an ado, to be sure, for a little slut for whose esteem I care no more than for that of the King of Borneo. However, by ascribing to me an ignoble motive she justifies my present attitude. Isn't she cunning?—La Brière will be saddled, like the little fool that he is; and five years hence we shall laugh at him well, she and I."

The coolness produced by this dispute between Modeste and Canalis was obvious to all eyes that evening. Canalis withdrew early, on the pretext of la Brière's illness, leaving the field free to the Master of the Horse. At about eleven Butscha, who had come to escort Madame Latournelle home, said in an undertone to Modeste:

"Was I right?"

"Alas, yes!" said she.

"But have you done as we agreed, and left the door ajar so that he may return?"

"My anger was too much for me," replied Modeste. "Such meanness brought the blood to my head, and I told him my mind."

"Well, so much the better! When you have quarreled so that you cannot speak civilly to each other, even then I undertake to make him so devoted and pressing that you yourself are taken in by him."

"Come, come, Butscha; he is a great poet, a gentleman, and a man of intellect."

"Your father's eight millions will be more than all that."

"Eight millions!" said Modeste.

"My master, who is selling his business, is setting out for Provence to look into Castagnould's investments as your father's agent. The sum-total of the contracts for repurchasing the lands of la Bastie amounts to four millions of francs, and your father has consented to every item. Your settlement is to be two millions, and the Colonel allows one for establishing you in Paris with a house and furniture. Calculate."

"Ah, then I may be Duchesse d'Hérouville," said Modeste, looking at Butscha.

"But for that ridiculous Canalis, you would have kept *his* whip, as sent by me," said Butscha, putting in a word for la Brière.

"Monsieur Butscha, do you really expect me to marry the man you may choose?" said Modeste, laughing.

"That worthy young fellow loves as truly as I do; you loved him yourself for a week, and he is a man of genuine heart," replied the clerk.

"And can he compete with a Crown appointment, do you think? There are but six—the High Almoner, the Chancellor, the Lord Chamberlain, the Master of the Horse, the High Constable, the High Admiral.—But there are no more Lords High Constable."

"But in six months, mademoiselle, the people, composed of an infinite number of malignant Butschas, may blow upon all this grandeur. Besides, what does nobility matter in these days? There are not a thousand real noblemen in France. The d'Hérouvilles are descended from an Usher of the Rod under Robert of Normandy. You will have many a vexation from those two knife-faced old maids.—If you are bent on being a Duchess—well, you belong to Franche Comté, the Pope will have at least as much consideration for you as for the tradespeople, he will sell you a duchy ending in *nia* or *agno*.—Do not trifle with your happiness for the sake of a Crown appointment!"

The reflections indulged in by Canalis during the night were all satisfactory. He could imagine nothing in the world worse than the situation of a married man without a fortune. Still tremulous at the thought of the danger he had been led into by his vanity, which he had pledged, as it were, to Modeste by his desire to triumph over the Duc d'Hérouville, and by his belief in Monsieur Mignon's millions, he began to wonder what the Duchesse de Chaulieu must be thinking of his stay at le Havre, aggravated by five days' cessation from

letter-writing, whereas in Paris they wrote each other four or five notes a week.

"And the poor woman is struggling to get me promoted to be Commander of the Legion of Honor, and to the place of Minister to the Grand Duchy of Baden!" cried he.

Forthwith, with the prompt decisiveness which in poets, as in speculators, is the result of a clear intuition of the future, he sat down and wrote the following letter:—

To Madame la Duchesse de Chaulieu.

"My dear Éléonore,—You are no doubt astonished at having had no news of me, but my stay here is not merely a matter of health; I also have had to do my duty in some degree to our little friend la Brière. The poor boy has fallen desperately in love with a certain Demoiselle Modeste de la Bastie, a little pale-faced, insignificant thread-paper of a girl, who, by the way, has as a vice a mania for literature, and calls herself poetical to justify the whims, the tantrums, and changes of a pretty bad temper. You know Ernest, he is so easily made a fool of, that I would not trust him alone. Mademoiselle de la Bastie set up a strange flirtation with your Melchior; she was very well inclined to be your rival, though she has lean arms and scraggy shoulders, like most young girls, hair more colorless than Madame de Rochefide's, and a very doubtful expression in her little gray eye. I pulled up this Immodeste's advances pretty short—perhaps rather too roughly; but that is the way of an absorbing passion. What do I care for all the women on earth, who, all put together, are not worth you?

"The people with whom we spend our time, who surround this heiress, are *bourgeois* enough to make one sick. Pity me; I spend my evenings with notaries' clerks, their wives, their cashiers, and a provincial money-lender; wide indeed is the gulf between this and the evenings in the Rue de Grenelle. The father's trumped-up fortune—he has just come home from China—has secured us the company of that

omnipresent suitor the Master of the Horse, hungrier for millions than ever, since it will cost six or seven, they say, to reclaim and work the much-talked-of alluvion of Hérouville. The King has no idea what a fatal gift he has made to the little Duke. His Grace, who does not suspect how small a fortune his hoped-for father-in-law possesses, is jealous only of me. La Brière is making his way with his idol under cover of his friend, who serves as a screen.

"In spite of Ernest's raptures, I, the poet, think of the substantial; and the information I have gathered as to the gentleman's wealth casts a gloomy hue over our secretary's prospects, for his lady-love has sharp enough teeth to eat a hole in any fortune. Now, if my angel would redeem some of our sins, she would try to find out the truth about this matter, by sending for her banker, Mongenod, and cross-questioning him with the skill that distinguishes her. Monsieur Charles Mignon, formerly a Colonel in the Cavalry of the Imperial Guard, has for seven years been in constant communication with Mongenod's house. They talk here of two hundred thousand francs in settlement at most; and before making an offer in form for the young lady on Ernest's behalf, I should be glad to have positive data. As soon as the good folks are agreed, I return to Paris. I know a way of bringing the business to a satisfactory conclusion for our lover. All that is needed is to secure permission for Monsieur Mignon's son-in-law to take his title of Count, and no man is more likely to obtain such a grant than Ernest, in view of his services, especially when seconded by us three—you, the Duke, and myself. With his tastes, Ernest, who will undoubtedly rise to be a Master of the Exchequer, will be perfectly happy living in Paris if he is certain of twenty-five thousand francs a year, a permanent office, and a wife—poor wretch!

"Oh, my dear! how I long to see the Rue de Grenelle again! A fortnight's absence, when it does not kill love, revives the ardor of its early days, and you know, better perhaps than I, all the reasons that make my love eternal. My bones in the tomb will love you still! Indeed, I cannot hold out! If I am

compelled to remain ten days longer, I must go to Paris for a few hours.

"Has the Duke got me rope to hang myself? And you, dear life, shall you have to take the Baden waters this season? The cooing of your *beau ténébreux,* as compared with the accents of happy love—always the same, and true to itself for nearly ten years past—has given me a deep contempt of marriage; I had never seen all this so close to my eyes before. Ah! my dear, what is called wrongdoing is a far closer tie between two souls than the law—is it not?"

This idea served as the text for two pages of reminiscences and of aspirations of too private a nature for publication.

On the day before Canalis posted this letter, Butscha, who wrote under the name of Jean Jacmin to his imaginary cousin Philoxène, had sent off his answer twelve hours in advance of the poet's letter. The Duchess, for the last fortnight extremely alarmed and offended by Melchior's silence, had dictated Philoxène's letter to her cousin; and now, after reading the clerk's reply—somewhat too decisive for the vanity of a lady of fifty—had made minute inquiries as to Colonel Mignon's fortune. Finding herself betrayed, deserted for money, Éléonore gave herself up to a paroxysm of rage, hatred, and cold malignancy. Philoxène, knocking at the door of her mistress' luxurious room, on going in, found her with tears in her eyes, and stood amazed at this unprecedented phenomenon, which she had never before seen during fifteen years of service.

"We expiate the happiness of ten years in ten minutes!" exclaimed the Duchess.

"A letter from le Havre, madame."

Éléonore read Canalis' effusion of prose without observing Philoxène's presence, and the maid's surprise was heightened as she saw the Duchess' face recover its serenity as she read the letter. If you hold out to a drowning man a pole as thick as a walking stick, he will regard it as the king's highway to safety; and so the happy Éléonore believed in the poet's good faith as she perused these sheets in which love and business, lies and truth, elbowed each other.

Just now, when the banker had left her, she had sent for her husband to hinder Melchior's promotion if there were time yet; but a generous regret came over her that rose to a sublime impulse.

"Poor boy!" thought she, "he has not the smallest thought of ill. He loves me as he did the first day; he tells me everything.—Philoxène!" said she, noticing her head maid loitering about, and affecting to arrange the toilet-table.

"Madame la Duchesse?"

"My hand-glass, child."

Éléonore looked at herself, noted the razor-fine lines grooving her forehead, but invisible at a distance; and she sighed, for she believed that in that sigh she was taking leave of love. Then she had a man's thought, above the pettiness of woman —a thought which is sometimes intoxicating; an intoxication which may perhaps account for the clemency of the Semiramis of the North when she made her young and lovely rival Momonoff's wife.

"Since he has not failed me, I will get the millions and the girl for him," thought she, "if this little Mademoiselle Mignon is as plain as he says she is."

Three knocks, delicately rapped out, announced the Duke, for whom his wife herself opened the door.

"Ah! you are better, my dear," cried he, with the assumed gladness that courtiers so well know how to put on, and by which simpletons are taken in.

"My dear Henri," said she, "it is really inconceivable that you should not by this time have secured Melchior's appointment, after sacrificing yourself for the King during your year's ministry, knowing that it would scarcely endure so long!"

The Duke glanced at Philoxène; and the maid, by an almost imperceptible jerk of the head, showed him the letter from le Havre on the dressing-table. "You would be bored to death in Germany, and quarrel with Melchior before your return," said the Duke artlessly.

"Why?"

"Well, would you not always be together?" replied the erewhile Ambassador with comical candor.

"Oh! no," said she; "I mean to get him married."

"If d'Hérouville is to be believed, our dear Canalis has not waited for your good offices," replied the Duke, smiling. "Grandlieu yesterday read me some passages of a letter to him from the Master of the Horse, which was no doubt edited by his aunt to come to your ears; for Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, always on the lookout for a fortune, knows that Grandlieu and I play whist together almost every evening. That good. little d'Hérouville invites the Prince de Cadignan to a Royal Hunt in Normandy, begging him to persuade the King to go, so as to turn the damsel's head when she finds herself the object of such a chivalrous procession. In fact, two words from Charles X. would settle everything. D'Hérouville says the girl is incomparably lovely."

"Henri, let us go to le Havre!" cried the Duchess, interrupting her husband.

"But on what excuse?" said he gravely—a man who had been in the intimate confidence of Louis XVIII.

"I never saw a hunt."

"That would be all very well if the King should be there, but to go so far for a hunt would be ridiculous; and he will not go, I have just spoken to him about it."

"Madame perhaps would go——"

"That is a better plan," said the Duke; "and the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse may help you to get her away from Rosny. Then the King would make no objection to his hounds being taken out.—But do not go to le Havre, my dear," said the Duke, in a paternal tone; "it would make you conspicuous. Look here; this, I think, will be a better plan. Gaspard has his Château of Rosembray on the further side of the forest of Brotonne; why not give him a hint to receive all the party there?"

"Through whom?"

"Why, his wife the Duchess, who attends the Holy Table with Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, might ask Gaspard to do it if the old maid hinted it to her."

"You are the dearest man!" said Éléonore. "I will write two lines to the old lady, and to Diane; for we must have hunting-suits made. The little hat, now I think of it, makes one look very much younger.—Did you win yesterday at the English Embassy?"

"Yes," said the Duke; "I wiped out my score."

"And, above all, Henri, set everything aside till Melchior's two promotions are settled."

After writing a few lines to the fair Diane de Maufrigneuse, and a note to Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, Éléonore flung this reply like the smack of a horse-whip across Canalis' lies:—

To Monsieur le Baron de Canalis.

"My dear Poet,—Mademoiselle de la Bastie is beautiful; Mongenod assures me her father has eight millions of francs; I had thought of making her your wife, so I am deeply annoyed by your want of confidence in me. If before you started for le Havre, you aimed at getting la Brière married to her, I cannot imagine your not telling me so plainly before you went. And why pass a fortnight without writing a line to a friend so easily alarmed as I am?

"Your letter came a little late; I had already seen the banker. You are a child, Melchior; you try to be cunning with us. That is not right. Even the Duke is amazed at your behavior; he thinks you not quite gentlemanly—which casts a doubt on the virtue of your lady mother.

"Now, I want to see things for myself. I shall, I believe, have the honor of attending Madame to the hunt arranged by the Duc d'Hérouville for Mademoiselle de la Bastie. I will contrive that you shall be invited to stay at Rosembray, as the hunt will probably take place at the Duc de Verneuil's.

"Believe me, none the less, my dear poet, your friend for life, Éléonore."

"There, Ernest," said Canalis, tossing this letter, which arrived at breakfast time, across the table in la Brière's face.

"That is the two thousandth love-letter I have received from that woman, and there is not one single *tu*. The noble Éléonore never compromised herself further than what you find there.—Get married, and make haste about it! The worst marriage in the world is more tolerable than the lightest of these halters.—Well, I am the veriest Nicodemus that ever dropped from the moon. Modeste has millions; she is lost to me for ever; for no one ever comes back from the poles, where we now are, to the tropics, where we dwelt three days ago! Besides, I have all the more reason to wish for your triumph over the little Duke, because I told the Duchesse de Chaulieu that I came here only for your sake; so now I shall work for you."

"Alas! Melchior, Modeste must need have so superior, so mature a character, and such a noble mind, to resist the spectacle of the Court, and all the splendor so skilfully displayed in her honor and glory by the Duke, that I cannot believe in the existence of such perfection; and yet—if she is still the Modeste of her letters, there may be a hope——"

"You are a happy fellow, young Boniface, to see the world and your lady-love through such green spectacles!" exclaimed Canalis, going out to walk in the garden.

The poet, caught between two falsehoods, could not make up his mind what to do next.

"Play the game by the rules, and you lose!" cried he, as he sat in the summer-house. "Every man of sense would undoubtedly have acted as I did four days ago, and have crept out of the trap in which I found myself. For in such a case you don't wait to untie the knots; you break through everything!—Come, I must be cold, calm, dignified, hurt. Honor will not allow of any other demeanor. English rigidity is the only way to recover Modeste's respect. After all, if I only get out of the scrape by falling back on my old felicity, my ten years' fidelity will be rewarded. Éléonore will find me a suitable match."

The hunt was destined to be the rallying point of all the

passions brought into play by the Colonel's fortune and his daughter's beauty. There was a sort of truce among the contending parties during the few days needed to prepare this solemn act of forestry; the drawing-room in the Villa Mignon had the peaceful appearance of a very united family party. Canalis, intrenched in his part of a much-injured man, made a display of courtesy; he put aside his pretentiousness, gave no more specimens of oratorical talent, and was charming, as clever men are when they shed their affectations. He discussed the money-market with Gobenheim, war with the Colonel, Germany with Madame Mignon, and housekeeping with Madame Latournelle, trying to win them over to la Brière. The Duc d'Hérouville frequently left the field free to the two friends, as he was obliged to go to Rosembray to consult the Duc de Verneuil and superintend the execution of the orders issued by the Master of the Hounds, the Prince de Cadignan.

Meanwhile, the comic element was not lacking. Modeste found herself between the disparagement Canalis tried to cast on the Duke's gallant attentions, and the exaggerated views of the two demoiselles d'Hérouville, who came every evening. Canalis pointed out to Modeste that, far from being the heroine of the day, she would be scarcely noticed. MADAME would be attended by the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, the daughter-in-law of the Master of the Hounds, by the Duchesse de Chaulieu, and some other ladies of the Court, and among them a mere girl would produce no sensation. Some officers would, no doubt, be invited from the garrison at Rouen, etc. Hélène was never tired of repeating to the girl, whom she looked upon as her sister-in-law, that she would, of course, be presented to MADAME; that the Duc de Verneuil would certainly invite her and her father to stay at Rosembray; that if the Colonel had any favor to ask of the King—such as a peerage—this would be an unique opportunity, for they did not despair of getting the King there on the third day; that she would be surprised at the charming reception she would meet with from the handsomest women of the Court, the Duchesses de Chaulieu, de Maufrigneuse, de Lenon-

court-Chaulieu, etc.; Modeste's prejudices against the Faubourg Saint-Germain would disappear—and so forth, and so forth. It was a most amusing little warfare, with its marches and counter-marches and strategy, which the Dumays, the Latournelles, Gobenheim and Butscha looked on at, and enjoyed, saying among themselves all manner of hard things about the nobility, as they watched their elaborate, cruel, and studied meanness.

The assurances of the d'Hérouville faction were justified by an invitation, in the most flattering terms, from the Duc de Verneuil and the Master of the King's Hounds to Monsieur le Comte de la Bastie and his daughter to be present at a Royal Hunt at Rosembray on the 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th of November.

La Brière, oppressed by gloomy presentiments, reveled in Modeste's presence in that spirit of concentrated avidity whose bitter joys are known only to lovers irrevocably and for ever discarded. The flashes of happiness in his inmost self, mingled with melancholy reflections on the same theme, "She is lost to me!" made the poor youth a pathetic spectacle, all the more touching because his countenance and person were in harmony with this depth of feeling. There is nothing more poetical than such a living elegy that has eyes, that walks, and sighs without rhyming.

Finally, the Duc d'Hérouville came to arrange for Modeste's journey. After crossing the Seine, she was to proceed in the Duke's traveling carriage with his aunt and sister. The Duke was perfect in his courtesy; he invited Canalis and la Brière, telling them, as he told Monsieur Mignon, that they would find hunters at their service.

The Colonel asked his daughter's three lovers to breakfast on the day of the departure. Then Canalis tried to execute a scheme that had ripened in his mind during the last few days—namely, to reconquer Modeste, and to trick the Duchess, the Master of the Horse, and la Brière. A graduate in diplomacy could not remain bogged in such a position as that in which he found himself. La Brière, on his part, had made

up his mind to bid Modeste an eternal farewell. Thus each suitor, as he foresaw the conclusion of a struggle that had been going on for three weeks, proposed to put in a last word, like a pleader to the judge before sentence is pronounced.

After dinner the day before, the Colonel took his daughter by the arm and impressed on her the necessity for coming to a decision.

"Our position with the d'Hérouville family would be intolerable at Rosembray. Do you want to be a duchess?" he asked Modeste.

"No, father," she replied.

"Then do you really love Canalis——?"

"Certainly not, papa; a thousand times, no!" said she, with childish irritability.

The Colonel looked at her with a sort of glee.

"Ah! I have not influenced you," cried the kind father. "But I may tell you now that even in Paris I had chosen my son-in-law when, on my impressing on him that I had no fortune, he threw his arms round me, saying that I had lifted a hundredweight from his heart."

"Of whom are you speaking?" asked Modeste, coloring.

"Of the man of solid virtues and sound morals," said he, mockingly repeating the phrase which, on the day after his return, had scattered Modeste's dreams.

"Oh, I am not thinking of him, papa! Leave me free to refuse the Duke myself; I know him, I know how to soothe him——"

"Then your choice is not made?"

"Not yet. I still have to guess a few syllables in the riddle of my future; but after having had a glimpse of the Court, I will tell you all my secret at Rosembray."

"You will join the hunt, will you not?" said the Colonel to Ernest, whom he saw coming down the path where he was walking with Modeste.

"No, Colonel," replied Ernest. "I have come to take leave of you and of mademoiselle. I am going back to Paris."

"You have no curiosity?" said Modeste, interrupting him, and looking at the bashful youth.

"Nothing is needed to keep me," said he, "but the expression of a wish I hardly hope for."

"If that is all, it will give me pleasure, at any rate," said the Colonel, as he went forward to meet Canalis, leaving his daughter alone for a moment with the hapless Ernest.

"Mademoiselle," said the young man, looking up at her with the courage of despair; "I have a petition to make."

"To me?"

"Let me depart forgiven! My life can never be happy; I must endure the remorse of having lost my happiness, by my own fault no doubt; but at least——"

"Before we part for ever," replied Modeste, interrupting him *à la* Canalis, "I want to know one thing only; and though you once assumed a disguise, I do not think that you will now be such a coward as to deceive me——"

At the word "coward" Ernest turned pale.

"You are merciless!" he exclaimed.

"Will you be frank with me?"

"You have the right to ask me such a humiliating question," said he, in a voice made husky by the violent beating of his heart.

"Well, then, did you read my letters out to Monsieur de Canalis?"

"No, mademoiselle; and though I gave them to the Colonel to read, it was only to justify my love, by showing him how my affection had had birth, and how genuine my efforts had been to cure you of your fancy."

"But what put this ignoble masquerading into your head?" she asked, with a kind of impatience.

La Brière related, in all its details, the scene to which Modeste's first letter had given rise, and the challenge which had resulted from Ernest's high opinion in favor of a young lady yearning for glory, as a plant strives for its share of the sunshine.

"Enough," said Modeste, concealing her agitation. "If you have not my heart, monsieur, you have my highest esteem."

This simple speech made la Brière quite dizzy. He felt himself totter, and leaned against a shrub, like a man whose senses are failing him. Modeste, who had walked away, turned her head and hastily came back.

"What is the matter?" she exclaimed, taking him by the hand to save him from falling.

Modeste felt his hand like ice, and saw a face as white as a lily; all the blood had rushed to his heart.

"Forgive me, mademoiselle,—I had fancied myself so despised——"

"Well," said she, with haughty scorn, "I did not say that I loved you."

And she again left la Brière, who, notwithstanding this hard speech, thought he was walking on the upper air. The earth felt soft beneath his feet, the trees seemed decked with flowers, the sky was rosy, and the air blue, as in the temples of Hymen at the close of a fairy drama that ends happily. In such circumstances, women are Janus-like, they see what is going on behind them without turning round; and Modeste saw in her lover's expression the unmistakable symptoms of a love such as Butscha's, which is beyond a doubt the *ne plus ultra* of a woman's desire. And the high value attached by la Brière to her esteem was to Modeste an infinitely sweet experience.

"Mademoiselle," said Canalis, leaving the Colonel, and coming to meet Modeste, "in spite of the small interest you take in my sentiments, it is a point of honor with me to wipe out a stain from which I have too long suffered. Here is what the Duchess wrote to me five days after my arrival here."

He made Modeste read the first few lines of the letter, in which the Duchess said that she had seen Mongenod, and wished that Melchior should marry Modeste; then having torn off the rest, he placed them in her hand.

"I cannot show you the remainder," said he, putting the paper in his pocket; "but I intrust these few lines to your delicacy, that you may be able to verify the handwriting. The girl who could ascribe to me such ignoble sentiments is

quite capable of believing in some collusion, some stratagem. This may prove to you how much I care to convince you that the difference between us was not based on the vilest interest on my part. Ah! Modeste," he went on, with tears in his voice, "your poet—Madame de Chaulieu's poet—has not less poetry in his heart than in his mind. You will see the Duchess; suspend your judgment of me till then." And he left Modeste quite disconcerted.

"On my word! They are all angels," said she to herself. "All too fine for marriage! Only the Duke is a human being."

"Mademoiselle Modeste, this hunt makes me very uneasy," said Butscha, appearing on the scene with a parcel under his arm. "I dreamed that your horse ran away with you, so I have been to Rouen to get you a Spanish snaffle; I have been told that a horse can never get it between his teeth. I implore you to use it; I have shown it to the Colonel, who has thanked me more than the thing is worth."

"Poor dear Butscha!" cried Modeste, touched to tears by this motherly care.

Butscha went off skipping like a man who has suddenly heard of the death of an old uncle leaving a fortune.

"My dear father," said Modeste, on returning to the drawing-room, "I should like very much to have that handsome whip; supposing you were to offer to exchange with Monsieur de la Brière—that whip for your picture by Ostade?"

Modeste cast a side glance at Ernest while the Colonel made this proposal, standing in front of the picture—the only thing he possessed as a memorial of the campaigns he had fought in; he had bought it of a citizen of Ratisbon. And seeing the eagerness with which Ernest rushed from the room, "He will attend the hunt," said she to herself.

Thus, strange to say, Modeste's three lovers all went to Rosembray with hearts full of hope, and enraptured by her adorable charms.

Rosembray, an estate recently purchased by the Duc de

Verneuil with the money that fell to his share of the thousand million francs voted to legitimize the sale of national property, is remarkable for a château comparable for magnificence with those of Mesnière and Balleroy. This noble and imposing mansion is reached by an immense avenue of ancestral elms four rows deep, and across a vast courtyard on a slope, like that of Versailles, with a splendid iron screen and two gate lodges, and surrounded by large orange trees in tubs. The façade to this *cour d'honneur* displays two stories of nineteen windows in each, between two wings at right angles—tall windows with small panes, set in carved stone arches, and separated by reeded pilasters. A cornice and balustrade screen an Italian roof, whence rise stone chimneys marked by trophies of arms, Rosembray having been built in the reign of Louis XIV. by a farmer-general named Cottin. The front towards the park differs from this, having a centre block of five windows projecting from the main building, with columns and a noble pediment. The Marigny family, to whom the possessions of this Cottin came by marriage with his sole heiress, had a group representing Dawn executed for this pediment by Coysevox. Below it two genii support a scroll, on which this motto is inscribed in honor of the King, instead of the old family device: *Sol nobis benignus.* The great Louis had made a Duke of the Marquis de Marigny, one of his most insignificant favorites.

From the top of the semicircular double flight of steps there is a view over a large lake, as long and wide as the grand canal of Versailles, starting from the bottom of a slope of turf worthy of the most English lawn, its banks dotted with clumps displaying the brightest autumn flowers. Beyond, on each side, a French formal parterre spreads its squared beds and paths—pages written in the most majestic style of le Nôtre. These two gardens are set in a border of wood and shrubbery, extending the whole length to the extent of thirty acres, and cleared in places in the English fashion under Louis XV. The view from the terrace is shut in beyond by a forest belonging to Rosembray, adjoining two demesnes,

one belonging to the nation, and one to the Crown. It would be hard to find a more beautiful landscape.

Modeste's arrival caused some sensation in the avenue when the carriage was seen with the royal livery of France, escorted by the Master of the Horse, the Colonel, Canalis, and la Brière, all riding, and preceded by an outsider in the Royal livery; behind them came ten servants, among them the Colonel's negro and mulatto, and his elegant britska, in which were the two ladies' maids and the luggage. The first carriage was drawn by four horses mounted by *tigers,* dressed with the spruce perfection insisted on by the Master of the Horse—often better served in such matters than the King himself.

Modeste, as she drove up and saw this minor Versailles, was dazzled by the magnificence of these great folks; she was suddenly conscious of having to meet these famous Duchesses; she dreaded seeming affected, provincial, or parvenu, lost her head completely, and repented of ever having wished for this hunting party.

When the carriage stopped, Modeste happily saw before her an old man in a fair, frizzy wig, with small curls, whose calm smooth, full face wore a paternal smile and an expression of monastic joviality, to which a half downcast look lent something like dignity. The Duchess, a woman of deep devotion, the only daughter of a very wealthy President of the Supreme Court, who had died in 1800, was the mother of four children; very thin and erect, she bore some resemblance to Madame Latournelle, if imagination could be persuaded to embellish the lawyer's wife with the graces of a noble lady-Prioress.

"Ah! how do you do, dear Hortense?" said Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, embracing the Duchess with all the sympathy that was a tie between these two proud spirits; "allow me to introduce to you and to our dear Duke, Mademoiselle de la Bastie, who is a little angel."

"We have heard so much about you, mademoiselle," said the Duchess, "that we have been most eager to have you here."

"We can but regret our lost time," added the Duc de Verneuil, bowing with gallant admiration.

"Monsieur le Comte de la Bastie," added the Master of the Horse, taking the Colonel by the arm, and leading him up to the Duke and Duchess with a tinge of respect in his tone and manner.

The Colonel bowed to the Duchess, the Duke gave him his hand.

"You are very welcome, Monsieur le Comte," said Monsieur de Verneuil. "You are the owner of many treasures," he added, glancing at Modeste.

The Duchess drew Modeste's hand through her arm and led her into a vast drawing-room, where half a score of women were sitting in groups round the fire. The men, led by the Duke, went to walk on the terrace, excepting only Canalis, who went in to pay his respects to the superb Éléonore. She, seated before a tapestry frame, was giving Mademoiselle de Verneuil some hints as to shading.

If Modeste had thrust her finger through with a needle when laying her hand on a cushion, she could not have felt a keener shock than she received from the icy glance, haughty and contemptuous, that the Duchesse de Chaulieu bestowed on her. From the first instant she saw no one but this woman, and guessed who she was. To know to what a pitch the cruelty can go of those sweet creatures who are exalted by our passion, women must be seen together. Modeste might have disarmed any one but Éléonore by her amazed and involuntary admiration; for if she had not known her rival's age, she would have taken her to be a woman of six-and-thirty; but there were greater surprises in store for her!

The poet found himself flung against the wrath of a great lady. Such anger is the most ruthless Sphinx; the face is beaming, all else is savage. Even kings do not know how to reduce the stronghold of exquisitely cold politeness which a mistress can then hide under steel armor. The lovely woman's countenance smiles, and at the same time the steel strikes home: the hand is of steel, the arm, the body, all is

steel. Canalis tried to clutch this steel, but his fingers slipped over it as his words slipped from her heart. And the gracious face, the gracious phrases, the gracious manners of the Duchess, concealed from every eye the steel of her cold fury—down to twenty-five degrees below zero. The sight of Modeste's supreme beauty, heightened by her journey, the appearance of the girl, as well dressed as Diane de Maufrigneuse, had fired the powders that reflection had stored up in Éléonore's brain.

All the women had gone to the window to see the wonder of the day step out of the carriage, followed by her three lovers.

"Do not let us show that we are so curious," said Madame de Chaulieu, struck to the heart by Diane's exclamation, "She is divine! Where can such a creature have dropped from?"

And they had fled back to the drawing-room, where each one had composed her countenance, while the Duchesse de Chaulieu felt in her heart a thousand vipers all crying at once to be satisfied.

Mademoiselle d'Hérouville remarked in an undertone, and with marked meaning, to the Duchesse de Verneuil:

"Éléonore is not cordial in her reception of her great Melchior."

"The Duchesse de Maufrigneuse thinks that there is a coolness between them," replied Laure de Verneuil simply. This phrase, so often spoken in the world of fashion, is full of meaning. We feel in it the icy polar blast.

"Why?" asked Modeste of the charming girl who had left the Convent of the Sacred Heart not more than two months since.

"The great man," replied the Duchess, signing to her daughter to be silent, "left her for a fortnight without writing a word to her, after setting out for le Havre, and saying that he had gone for his health."

Modeste gave a little start which struck Laure, Hélène, and Mademoiselle d'Hérouville.

"And meanwhile," the devout Duchess went on, "she was getting him appointed Commander of the Legion of Honor and Minister to Baden."

"Oh, it is very wrong of Canalis, for he owes everything to her," said Mademoiselle d'Hérouville.

"Why did not Madame de Chaulieu come to le Havre?" asked Modeste guilelessly of Hélène.

"My child," said the Duchesse de Verneuil, "she would let herself be killed without speaking a word. Look at her. What a queen! With her head on the block she would still smile, like Mary Stuart—indeed, our handsome Éléonore has the same blood in her veins."

"And she did not write to him?" said Modeste.

"Diane told me," replied the Duchess, prompted to further confidences by an elbow nudge from Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, "that she had sent a very cutting answer to the first letter Canalis wrote to her about ten days ago."

This statement made Modeste color with shame for Canalis; she longed not to crush him under her feet, but to revenge herself by a piece of mischief more cruel than a poniard thrust. She looked proudly at Madame de Chaulieu. That glance was gilded with eight millions of francs.

"Monsieur Melchior!" said she.

All the women looked up, first at the Duchess, who was talking to Canalis over the work-frame, then at this young girl, so ill bred as to disturb two lovers who were settling their quarrel—a thing which is never done in any rank of life.

Diane de Maufrigneuse gave her head a little toss, as much as to say, "The child is in her rights."

Finally, the twelve women smiled at each other, for they were all jealous of a woman of fifty-six who was still handsome enough to dip her hand in the common treasury and steal a young woman's share. Melchior glanced at Modeste with feverish irritability, the hasty look of a master to a servant, while the Duchess bent her head with the air of a lioness interrupted at her meal; her eyes, fixed on the canvas, shot flames of fire, almost red-hot, at the poet while she sifted his

very soul with her epigrams, for each sentence was a vengeance for a triple injury.

"Monsieur Melchior!" repeated Modeste, in a voice that asserted its right to be heard.

"What is it, mademoiselle?" asked the poet.

He was obliged to rise, but he stood still half-way between the work-frame, which was near the window, and the fireplace, by which Modeste was sitting on the Duchesse de Verneuil's sofa. What cruel reflections were forced on the ambitious man when he met Éléonore's steady eye. If he should obey Modeste, all was over for ever between the poet and his protectress. If he paid no heed to the girl, it would be an avowal of his serfdom, he would lose the advantages gained by five-and-twenty days of meanness, and fail in the simplest rules of gentlemanly politeness. The greater the folly, the more imperatively the Duchess insisted on it. Modeste's beauty and fortune, set in the opposite scale to Éléonore's influence and established rights, made this hesitancy between the man and his honor as terrible to watch as the peril of a matador in the ring. A man never knows such frightful palpitations as those that seemed to threaten Canalis with an aneurism, anywhere but in front of the gaming-table, where his fortune or his ruin is settled within five minutes.

"Mademoiselle d'Hérouville made me get out of the carriage in such a hurry," said Modeste to Canalis, "that I dropped my handkerchief——"

Canalis gave a highly significant shrug.

"And," she went on, in spite of this impatient gesture, "I had, tied to it, the key of a blotting case, containing an important fragment of a letter; will you be good enough, Melchior, to ask for it——"

Between an angel and a tigress, equally irate, Canalis, who had turned pale, hesitated no longer; the tigress seemed the less dangerous. He was on the point of committing himself when la Brière appeared in the doorway, seeming to Canalis something like the archangel Michael descended from heaven.

"Here, Ernest, Mademoiselle de la Bastie wants you," said the poet, hastily retreating to his chair by the work-frame.

Ernest, on his part, went at once to Modeste without bowing to any one else; he saw her alone, received her instructions with visible joy, and ran off with the unconfessed approbation of every woman present.

"What a position for a poet!" said Modeste to Hélène, pointing to the worsted work at which the Duchess was stitching furiously.

"If you speak to her, if you once look at her, all is ended," said Éléonore to Melchior in a low tone, for his *mezzo termine* had not satisfied her. "And, mind, when I am absent I shall leave other eyes to watch you."

As she spoke, Madame de Chaulieu, a woman of medium height, but rather too fat—as all women are who are still handsome when past fifty—rose, walked towards the group with which Diane de Maufrigneuse was sitting, stepping out with small feet as firm and light as a fawn's. Under her full forms the exquisite refinement was conspicuous with which women of that type are gifted, and which gives them that vigorous nervous system that controls and animates the development of the flesh. It was impossible otherwise to account for her light step, which was amazingly dignified. Only those women whose quarterings of nobility date back to Noah, like Éléonore's, know how to be majestic in spite of being as large as a farmer's wife. A philosopher might, perhaps, have pitied Philoxène, while admiring the happy arrangement of the bodice and the careful details of a morning dress worn with the elegance of a queen and the ease of a girl. Boldly wearing her own abundant and undyed hair, plaited on the top of her head in a coronet like a tower, Éléonore proudly displayed her white neck, her finely shaped bust and shoulders, her dazzling bare arms, ending in hands famous for their beauty. Modeste, like all the Duchess' rivals, saw in her one of those women of whom the others say, "She is past mistress of us all!"

In fact, every one recognized her as one of those few great

ladies who are now become so rare in France. Any attempt to describe how majestic was the carriage of her head, how refined and delicate this or that curve of her neck, what harmony there was in her movements, what dignity in her mien, what nobleness in the perfect agreement of every detail with the whole result in the little arts that are a second nature, and make a woman holy and supreme,—this would be to try to analyze the sublime. We delight in such poetry, as in that of Paganini, without seeking the means, for the cause is a soul making itself visible.

The Duchess bowed, saluting Hélène and her aunt; then she said to Diane in a clear, bright voice without a trace of emotion:

"Is it not time to dress, Duchess?"

And she swept out of the room, accompanied by her daughter-in-law and Mademoiselle d'Hérouville, each giving her an arm. She was speaking in a low voice as she went away with the old maid, who pressed her to her heart, saying, "You are quite charming!" which was as much as to say, "I am wholly yours in return for the service you have just done us."

Mademoiselle d'Hérouville returned to the drawing-room to play her part as spy, and her first glance told Canalis that the Duchess' last words were no vain threat. The apprentice to diplomacy felt he knew too little of the minor science for so severe a struggle, and his wit served him at any rate so far as to enable him to assume a straightforward, if not a dignified attitude. When Ernest returned with Modeste's handkerchief, he took him by the arm and led him out on the lawn.

"My dear fellow," said he, "I am, of all men, not the most unhappy, but the most ridiculous. So I have recourse to you to help me out of the wasps' nest I have got into.—Modeste is a demon; she saw my embarrassment, she mocks at it; she has just spoken to me of two lines of a letter of Madame de Chaulieu's that I was fool enough to trust her with. If she were to show them, I could never make it up again with Éléonore. So, pray, at once ask Modeste for that paper, and

tell her from me that I have no views—no pretensions to her hand; I rely on her delicacy, on her honesty as a lady, to behave to me as though we had never met; I entreat her not to speak to me; I beseech her to vouchsafe to be implacable, though I dare not hope that her spite will move her to a sort of jealous wrath that would serve my ends to a miracle. . . Go, I will wait here."

On re-entering the room, Ernest de la Brière saw there a young officer of Havré's company of the Guards, the Vicomte de Sérizy, who had just arrived from Rosny to announce that MADAME was obliged to be present at the opening of the session. This constitutional solemnity was, as is well known, a very important function. Charles X. pronounced a speech in the presence of his whole family, the Dauphiness and MADAME being present in their seats. The choice of the envoy charged with expressing the Princess' regrets was a compliment to Diane. She was supposed to be the immediate object of this fascinating youth's adoration; he was the son of a Minister of State, gentleman-in-waiting, hopeful of high destinies, as being an only son and heir to an immense fortune. The Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, however, only accepted the Viscount's attentions in order to throw light on the age of Madame de Sérizy, who, according to the chronicle repeated behind fans, had won from her the heart of handsome Lucien de Rubempré.

"You, I hope, will do us the pleasure of remaining at Rosembray," said the severe Duchess to the young man.

While keeping her ears open to evil-speaking, the pious lady shut her eyes to the peccadilloes of her guests, who were carefully paired by the Duke; for no one knows what such excellent women will tolerate on the plea of bringing a lost sheep back to the fold by treating it with indulgence.

"We reckoned without the Constitutional Government," said the Duc d'Hérouville, "and Rosembray loses a great honor, Madame la Duchesse——"

"We shall feel all the more at our ease," observed a tall,

lean old man of about seventy-five, dressed in blue cloth, and keeping on his hunting cap by leave of the ladies.

This personage, who was very like the Duc de Bourbon, was no less a man than the Prince de Cadignan, the Master of the Hounds, and one of the last of the French *Grands Seigneurs*.

Just as la Brière was about to slip behind the sofa to beg a minute's speech with Modeste, a man of about eight-and-thirty came in, short, fat, and common-looking.

"My son, the Prince de Loudon," said the Duchesse de Verneuil to Modeste, who could not control an expression of amazement on her youthful features as she saw the man who now bore the name which the General of the Vendée Cavalry had made so famous by his daring and by his execution.

The present Duc de Verneuil was the third son taken by his father into exile, and the only survivor of four children.

"Gaspard," said the Duchess, calling her son to her. The Prince obeyed his mother, who went on as she introduced Modeste:

"Mademoiselle de la Bastie, my dear."

The heir presumptive, whose marriage to Desplein's only daughter was a settled thing, bowed to the girl without seeming struck by her beauty, as his father had been. Modeste thus had an opportunity of comparing the young men of to-day with the old men of the past; for the old Prince de Cadignan had already made her two or three very pretty speeches, proving that he was not less devoted to women than to Royalty. The Duc de Rhétoré, Madame de Chaulieu's eldest son, noted for the style which combines impertinence with easy freedom, had, like the Prince de Loudon, greeted Modeste almost cavalierly.

The reason of this contrast between the sons and the fathers may, perhaps, lie in the fact that the heirs no longer feel themselves to be objects of importance, as their ancestors were, and excuse themselves from the duties of power, since they no longer have anything but its shadow. The fathers still have the fine manners inherent in their vanished grandeur, like

mountains gilded by the sunshine, when all round them is in darkness.

At last Ernest succeeded in saying two words to Modeste, who rose.

"My little beauty!" said the Duchess, as she pulled a bell, thinking that Modeste was going to change her dress, "you shall be taken to your rooms."

Ernest went with Modeste to the foot of the great staircase to make the unhappy Melchior's request, and he tried to touch her by describing the poet's miseries.

"He loves her, you see! He is a captive who thought he could break his chain."

"Love! In a man who calculates everything so closely?" retorted Modeste.

"Mademoiselle, you are at the beginning of your life; you do not know its narrow places. Every sort of inconsistency must be forgiven to a man who places himself under the dominion of a woman older than himself, for he is not responsible. Consider how many sacrifices Canalis has offered to that divinity! how he has sown too much seed to scorn the harvest; the Duchess represents to him ten years of devotion and of happiness. You had made the poet forget everything, for, unhappily, he has more vanity than pride; he knew not what he was losing till he saw Madame de Chaulieu again. If you knew Canalis, you would help him. He is a mere child, and is spoiling his life for ever.—You say he calculates everything, but he calculates very badly, like all poets indeed —creatures of impulse, full of childishness, dazzled, like children, by all that shines, and running after it! He has been fond of horses, of pictures; he has yearned for glory; he sells his pictures to get armor and furniture of the style of the Renaissance and of Louis XV.; he now has a grudge against the Government. Admit that his whims are on a grand scale?"

"That will do," said Modeste. "Come," she added, as she saw her father, and beckoned to him to ask him to accompany her, "I will give you that scrap of paper; you can take it to the

great man, and assure him of my entire consent to all he wishes, but on one condition. I beg you to give him my best thanks for the pleasure I have enjoyed in seeing him perform for my sole benefit one of the finest pieces of the German theatre. I know now that Goethe's *chef-d'œuvre* is neither *Faust* nor *Egmont*"—and, as Ernest looked at the sprightly girl with a puzzled expression—"it is *Torquato Tasso*," she added. "Desire Monsieur Canalis to read it once more," she went on, smiling. "I particularly desire that you will repeat this to your friend word for word, for it is not an epigram, it is the justification of his conduct—with this difference, that I hope he will become quite sane, thanks to his Éléonore's folly."

The Duchess' head waiting-maid led Modeste and her father to their rooms, where Françoise Cochet had already arranged everything. Their choice elegance surprised the Colonel, and Françoise told him that there were thirty guest-chambers in the same style in the Château.

"That is my idea of a country-house," said Modeste.

"The Comte de la Bastie will have such another built for you," replied the Colonel.

"Here, monsieur," said Modeste, handing the scrap of paper to Ernest, "go and reassure our friend."

The words "our friend" struck the young man. He looked at Modeste to see if there were seriously some community of sentiment such as she seemed to acknowledge; and the girl, understanding the implied question, added:

"Well, go; your friend is waiting."

La Brière colored violently, and went, in a state of doubt, anxiety, and disturbance more terrible than despair. The approach to happiness is to true lovers very like what the poetry of Catholicism has called the Straits of Paradise, to express a dark, difficult, and narrow way, echoing with the last cries of supreme anguish.

An hour later the distinguished party had all met again in the drawing-room, some playing at whist, others chatting, the women busy with fancy-work, while awaiting the dinner-

hour. The Master of the Hounds led Monsieur Mignon to talk of China, of his campaigns, of the great Provençal families of Portenduère, l'Estorado, and Maucombe; and he remonstrated with him on not asking for employment, assuring him that nothing would be easier than to obtain a post in the Guards with his full rank as Colonel.

"A man of your birth and fortune can never class himself with the present Opposition," said the Prince with a smile.

This aristocratic society pleased Modeste; and not only that, during her visit she gained a perfection of manner which, but for this revelation, she would never in her life have acquired. If you show a clock to a natural mechanic, it is always enough to reveal to him what mechanism means; the germs within him are at once developed. In the same way, Modeste intuitively assimilated everything that gave distinction to the Duchesses de Maufrigneuse and de Chaulieu. To her each detail was a lesson, where a commonplace woman would have fallen into absurdity by imitating mere manners. A girl of good birth, well informed, with the instincts of Modeste, fell naturally into the right key, and discerned the differences which divide the aristocratic from the middle class, and provincial life from that of the Faubourg Saint-Germain; she caught the almost imperceptible shades; in short, she recognized the grace of a really fine lady, and did not despair of acquiring it.

In the midst of this Olympus she saw that her father and la Brière were infinitely superior to Canalis. The great poet, abdicating his real and indisputable power, that of the intellect, was nothing but a Master of Appeals, eager to become a Minister, anxious for the collar of the Legion of Honor, and obliged to subserve every constellation. Ernest de la Brière, devoid of ambition, was simply himself; while Melchior, eating humble pie, to use a vulgar phrase, paid court to the Prince de Loudon, the Duc de Rhétoré, the Vicomte de Sérizy, the Duc de Maufrigneuse, as though he had no liberty of speech like Colonel Mignon, Comte de la Bastie, proud of his services and of the Emperor Napoleon's esteem. Modeste

saw the continued pre-occupation of a wit seeking a point to raise a laugh, a brilliant remark to surprise, or a compliment to flatter the high and mighty personages, on whose level he aimed at keeping himself. In short, here the peacock shed his plumes.

In the course of the evening Modeste went to sit with the Master of the Horse in a recess of the drawing-room; she took him there to put an end to a struggle she could no longer encourage without lowering herself in her own eyes.

"Monsieur le Duc," she began, "if you knew me well, you would know how deeply I am touched by your attentions. It is precisely the high esteem I have for your character, the friendship inspired by such a nature as yours, which makes me anxious not to inflict the smallest wound on your self-respect. Before you came to le Havre I loved sincerely, deeply, and for ever a man who is worthy to be loved, and from whom my affection is still a secret; but I may tell you, and in this I am more sincere than most girls, that if I had not been bound by this voluntary engagement, you would have been my choice, so many and so great are the good qualities I have found in you. A few words dropped by your sister and aunt compel me to say this. If you think it necessary, by to-morrow, before the hunt, my mother shall recall me home under the excuse of serious indisposition. I will not be present without your consent at an entertainment arranged by your kind care, where, if my secret should escape me, I might aggrieve you by an insult to your legitimate pretensions.

"'Why did I come?' you may ask. I might have declined. Be so generous as not to make a crime of an inevitable curiosity. This is not the most delicate part of what I have to communicate. You have firmer friends than you know of in my father and me; and as my fortune was the prime motor in your mind when you came to seek me, without wishing to treat it as a solace to the grief your gallantry requires of you, I may tell you that my father is giving his mind to the matter of the Hérouville lands. His friend

Dumay thinks the scheme feasible, and has been feeling his way to the formation of a company. Gobenheim, Dumay, and my father are each ready with fifteen hundred thousand francs, and undertake to collect the remainder by the confidence they will inspire in the minds of capitalists by taking substantial interest in the business.

"Though I may not have the honor of being the Duchesse d'Hérouville, I am almost certain of putting you in the position to choose her one day with perfect freedom in the exalted sphere to which she belongs.—Oh, let me finish," said she, at a gesture of the Duke's.

"It is easy to see from my brother's agitation," said Mademoiselle d'Hérouville to her niece, "that you have gained a sister."

"Monsieur le Duc, I decided on this on the day of our first ride together, when I heard you lamenting your position. This is what I wanted to tell you; on that day my fate was sealed. If you have not won a wife, you have, at any rate, found friends at Ingouville, if, indeed, you will accept us as friends."

This little speech which Modeste had prepared was uttered with such soul-felt charm that tears rose to the Duke's eyes. He seized Modeste's hand and kissed it.

"Remain here for the hunt," said he. "My small merit has accustomed me to such refusals. But while I accept your friendship and the Colonel's, allow me to assure myself, by inquiring of the most competent experts, that the reclaiming of the marsh lands of Hérouville will involve the Company of which you speak in no risks, but may bring in some profits, before I accept the liberality of your friends.

"You are a noble girl, and though it breaks my heart to be no more than your friend, I shall glory in the title, and prove it to you whenever and wherever I find occasion."

"At any rate, Monsieur le Duc, let us keep the secret to ourselves. My choice will not be announced, unless I am greatly mistaken, till my mother is completely cured; for it is my desire that my plighted husband and I should be blessed with her first glances."

"Ladies," said the Prince de Cadignan at the moment when all were going to bed, "I remember that several of you proposed to follow the hunt with us to-morrow; now I think it my duty to inform you, that if you are bent on being Dianas, you must rise with the dawn. The meet is fixed for half-past eight. I have often in the course of my life seen women display greater courage than men, but only for a few minutes, and you will all need a certain modicum of determination to remain on horseback for a whole day excepting during the halt called for luncheon—a mere snack, as beseems sportsmen and sportswomen.—Are you still all resolved to prove yourselves gallant horsewomen?"

"I, Prince, cannot help myself," said Modeste slily.

"I can answer for myself," said the Duchesse de Chaulieu.

"I know my daughter Diane; she is worthy of her name," replied the Prince. "Well, then, you are all primed for the sport. However, for the sake of Madame and Mademoiselle de Verneuil, who remain at home, I shall do my best to turn the stag to the further end of the pool."

"Do not be uneasy, ladies, the hunters' snack will be served under a splendid marquee," said the Prince de Loudon when the Master of the Hounds had left the room.

Next morning at daybreak everything promised fine weather. The sky, lightly veiled with gray mist, showed through it here and there in patches of pure blue, and it would be entirely cleared before noon by a northwest breeze, which was already sweeping up some little fleecy clouds. As they left the Château, the Master of the Hounds, the Prince de Loudon, and the Duc de Rhétoré, who, having no ladies under their care, started first for the meet, saw the chimneys of the house piercing through the veil-mist in white masses against the russet foliage, which the trees in Normandy never lose till quite the end of a fine autumn.

"The ladies are in luck," said the Prince to the Duc de Rhétoré.

"Oh, in spite of their bravado last night, I fancy they will leave us to hunt without them," replied the Duc de Verneuil.

"Yes, if they had not each a gentleman-in-waiting," retorted the Duke.

At this moment these determined sportsmen—for the Prince de Loudon and the Duc de Rhétoré are of the race of Nimrod, and supposed to be the finest shots of the Faubourg Saint-Germain—heard the noise of an altercation, and rode forward at a gallop to the clearing appointed for the meet, at one of the openings into the Forest of Rosembray, and remarkable for a mossy knoll. This was the subject of the quarrel. The Prince de Loudon, bitten by Anglomania, had placed at the Duke de Verneuil's orders the whole of his stable and kennel, in the English style throughout. On one side of the clearing stood a young Englishman, short, fair, insolent-looking, and cool, speaking French after a fashion, and dressed with the neatness that characterizes Englishmen even of the lowest class. John Barry had a tunic-coat of scarlet cloth belted round the waist, silver buttons with the arms of Verneuil, white doeskin breeches, topboots, a striped waistcoat, and a black velvet collar and cap. In his right hand he held a hunting-crop, and in his left, hanging by a silk cord, was a brass horn. This chief huntsman had with him two large thoroughbred hounds, pure fox-hounds with white coats spotted with tan, high on their legs, with keen noses, small heads, and short ears, high up. This man, one of the most famous huntsmen of the county whence the Prince had sent for him at great expense, ruled over fifteen hunters and sixty English-bred dogs, which cost the Duc de Verneuil enormous sums; though he cared little for sport, he indulged his son in this truly royal taste. The subordinates, men and horses, stood some little way off, and kept perfect silence.

Now on arriving on the ground, John found there three huntsmen with three packs of the King's hounds that had arrived before him in carts; the Prince de Cadignan's three best men, whose figures, both in character and costume, were a perfect contrast with the representative of insolent Albion. These, the Prince's favorites, all wearing three-cornered cocked hats, very low and flat, beneath which grinned tanned,

wrinkled, weather-beaten faces, lighted up as it were by their twinkling eyes, were curiously dry, lean, and sinewy men, burnt up with the passion for sport. Each was provided with a large bugle hung about with green worsted cords that left nothing visible but the bell of the trumpet; they kept their dogs in order by the eye and voice. The noble brutes, all splashed with liver-color and black, each with his individual expression, as distinct as Napoleon's soldiers, formed a *posse* of subjects more faithful than those whom the King was at that moment addressing—their eyes lighting up at the slightest sound with a spark that glittered like a diamond—this one from Poitou, short in the loins, broad-shouldered, low on the ground, long-eared, that one an English dog, white, slim in the belly, with short ears, and made for coursing: all the young hounds eager to give tongue, while their elders, seamed with scars, lay quiet, at full length, their heads resting on their fore-paws, and listening on the ground like wild men of the woods.

On seeing the English contingent, the dogs and the King's men looked at each other, asking without saying a word:

"Are we not to hunt by ourselves? Is not this a slur on His Majesty's Royal Hunt?"

After beginning with some banter, the squabble had grown warm between Monsieur Jacquin la Roulie, the old Chief Huntsman of the French force, and John Barry, the young Briton.

While still at some distance the princes guessed what had given rise to the quarrel, and the Master of the Hounds, putting spurs to his horse, ended the matter by asking in a commanding tone:

"Who beat the wood?"

"I, monseigneur," said the Englishman.

"Very good," said the Prince de Cadignan, listening to John Barry's report.

Men and dogs, all alike, were respectful in the presence of the Master of the Hounds, as though all alike recognized his supreme authority. The Prince planned the order of the

day; for a hunt is like a battle, and Charles X.'s Master of the Hounds was a Napoleon of the forest. Thanks to the admirable discipline carried out by his orders in stable and kennel, he could give his whole mind to strategy and the science of the chase. He assigned a place in the proceedings of the day to the Prince de Loudon's hounds and men, reserving them, like a cavalry corps, to turn the stag back on the pool, in the event of the King's packs succeeding, as he hoped, in forcing the game into the Royal demesne lying in the distance in front of the Château. He gratified the self-respect of his own old retainers by giving them the hardest work, and that of the Englishman, whom he employed in his own special line, by giving him an opportunity of displaying the strength of limb of his dogs and horses. Thus the two methods would work against each other, and do wonders to excite reciprocal emulation.

"Are we to wait any longer, monseigneur?" asked la Roulie respectfully.

"I understand you, old friend," replied the Prince. "It is late, but——"

"Here come the ladies, for Jupiter scents the fetish odors," said the second huntsman, observing the nose of his favorite hound.

"Fetish?" repeated the Prince de Loudon with a smile.

"He probably means fetid," said the Duc de Rhétoré.

"That is it, no doubt, for everything that does not smell of the kennel is poisonous, according to Monsieur Laravine," replied the Prince.

In point of fact, the three gentlemen could see in the distance a party of sixteen riders, and fluttering at their head the green veils of four ladies. Modeste with her father, the Duc d'Hérouville, and little la Brière, was in front, with the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse attended by the Vicomte de Sérizy. Then came the Duchesse de Chaulieu with Canalis at her side, she smiling at him with no sign of rancor. On reaching the clearing, where the huntsmen, dressed in red, holding their hunting horns, and surrounded by dogs and beaters, formed a group worthy of the brush of Van der Meulen, the Duchesse

de Chaulieu, an admirable figure on horseback, though somewhat too stout, drew up close to Modeste, feeling it beneath her dignity to sulk with the young person to whom, the day before, she had not spoken a word.

Just at the moment when the Master of the Hounds had ended his compliments on such fabulous punctuality, Éléonore condescended to remark the splendid whip handle that sparkled in Modeste's little hand, and graciously begged to examine it.

"It is the finest thing in its way that I have ever seen," said she, showing the gem to Diane de Maufrigneuse; "but, indeed, it is in harmony with the owner's whole person," she added, as she returned it to Modeste.

"You will confess, madame" replied Mademoiselle de la Bastie, with a mischievous but tender glance at la Brière, in which he could read an avowal, "that it is a very strange gift as coming from a future husband——"

"Indeed," exclaimed Madame de Maufrigneuse, "I should regard it as a recognition of my rights, remembering Louis XIV."

There were tears in la Brière's eyes; he dropped his bridle, and was ready to fall; but another look from Modeste recalled him to himself, by warning him not to betray his happiness.

The cavalcade set out.

The Duc d'Hérouville said in a low voice to la Brière: "I hope, monsieur, that you will make your wife happy, and if I can in any way serve you, command me; for I should be delighted to contribute to the happiness of two such charming people."

This great day, when such important interests of hearts and fortunes were definitely settled, to the Master of the Hounds offered no other problem but that as to whether the stag would cross the pool, and be killed on the grass slope within sight of the Château; for huntsmen of such experience are like chess players, who can foresee a checkmate many moves ahead. The fortunate old gentleman succeeded to the height of his wishes; the run was splendid, and the ladies

relieved him of their presence on the next day but one, which proved to be rainy.

The Duc de Verneuil's guests remained three days at Rosembray. On the last morning the *Gazette de France* contained the announcement that M. le Baron de Canalis was appointed to the rank of Commander of the Legion of Honor and the post of Minister at Carlsruhe.

When, early in the month of December, the Comtesse de la Bastie was operated on by Desplein, and could at last see Ernest de la Brière, she pressed Modeste's hand, and said in her ear:

"I should have chosen him."

Towards the end of February all the documents relating to the acquisition of the estates were signed by the worthy and excellent Latournelle, Monsieur Mignon's attorney in Provence. At this time the family of la Bastie obtained from His Majesty the distinguished honor of his signature to the marriage contract, and the transmission of the title and the arms of la Bastie to Ernest de la Brière, who was authorized to call himself the Vicomte de la Bastie-la Brière. The estate of la Bastie, reconstituted to yield more than a hundred thousand francs a year, was entailed by letters patent registered by the Court in the month of April.

La Brière's witnesses were Canalis and the Minister whose private secretary he had been for five years. Those who signed for the bride were the Duc d'Hérouville and Desplein, for whom the Mignons cherished enduring gratitude, after giving him magnificent proofs of it.

By and by, perhaps, in this long record of our manners, we may meet again with Monsieur and Madame de la Brière-la Bastie, and connoisseurs will then perceive how easy and sweet a tie is marriage when the wife is well informed and clever; for Modeste, who kept her promise of avoiding all the absurdities of pedantry, is still the pride and delight of her husband, of her family, and of her circle of friends.

PARIS, *March–July* 1844.

THE HATED SON

TRANSLATED BY

J. WALKER McSPADDEN

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THE HATED SON

To Madame la Baronne James Rothschild.

I.

HOW THE MOTHER LIVED

One winter's night, about two o'clock in the morning, the Countess Jeanne d'Hérouville suffered such keen pains, that, despite her inexperience, she knew they heralded an approaching confinement. Instinct, that causes one to seek relief in a change of posture, led her to sit erect, either to investigate the nature of these unaccustomed pangs, or to ponder upon her situation. She was a prey to cruel fears—less on account of the dangers attendant upon this first accouchement, so terrifying to most women, than for the perils which awaited her child.

To avoid awakening her husband, lying by her side, the poor woman took the minutest precautions suggested by profound terror, and she proceeded as stealthily as an escaping convict. Although her suffering became more and more poignant, she ceased to feel it, so concentrated were all her energies on the difficult task of bracing herself on the pillow with her clammy hands, to relieve her tortured body of a posture that left her helpless. At the slightest rustling of the large, green-silk coverlet, under which she had spent few quiet moments since her marriage, she stopped short as though she had rung a bell. Compelled to watch the Count, she divided her attention between the fold of noisy cloth and a coarse, swarthy face

whose moustache almost touched her shoulder. If some louder breathing than usual proceeded from her husband's lips, it aroused a sudden fear that deepened the flush overspreading her cheeks on account of this two-fold agony. The criminal who comes by night to the prison door and seeks noiselessly to turn the key he has found in the harsh lock, could not be more timidly bold.

When the Countess found herself upright without having awakened her keeper, she let slip a gesture of child-like joy that revealed the artlessness of her nature. But the half-formed smile upon her swollen lips was promptly repressed; her brow became clouded with dread, and her blue eyes resumed their mournful look. She stifled a sigh and replaced her hands, not without necessary precautions, upon the fatal conjugal pillow. Then, as though for the first time since marriage she found herself free in action and thought, she investigated her surroundings, craning her neck in a startled way like a bird in a cage. To see her thus, one could easily believe that, formerly, she was all joy and frivolity, but that fate had thwarted her early hopes suddenly, and changed her innocent gayety to sadness.

The room was one of the sort that, in our day, is pointed out by octogenarian stewards to visitors to the old castle, with the remark: "This is the famous room where Louis XIII. slept." It was hung with tapestries, usually of sombre hue, bordered by walnut frames, whose delicate carving was marred by age. On the ceiling the joists formed squares decorated with arabesques in the style of the preceding century, and preserving a chestnut color. The decorations were full of harsh tints, and reflected so little light that it was difficult to distinguish their pattern, even when the sun shone full in this immense, high-ceiled chamber.

The silver lamp placed on the mantel of a huge chimney lighted the place so feebly that the tremulous rays might be compared to nebulous stars which, at intervals, pierced the grayish veil of an autumnal night. The figures stamped into the marble slabs of the chimney-piece, just opposite the

Countess' bed, presented faces so grotesquely hideous that she dared not look at them lest they might affect her or greet her with a cackling laugh from their gaping, contorted mouths.

Just then a terrible storm rumbled down the chimney, which, while reëchoing the least squall, took on a mournful tone; and the breadth of its funnel gave it so direct communication with the elements that the embers had a sort of respiration—they glowed or dimmed as the wind turned.

The escutcheon of the d'Hérouvilles sculptured in white marble, with all its figures and supporting designs, gave a tomb-like appearance to the place, while the hangings of the bed were but another monument raised to the glory of Hymen. A modern architect would have been greatly at loss to decide whether the chamber had been made for the bed, or the bed for the chamber. Two Cupids, who disported in a walnut sky embellished with garlands, might have passed for angels. Colonnades, also of walnut, that upheld the dome were graven with mythological characters taken at random from the Bible, or Ovid's "Metamorphoses." Remove the bed, and the ceiling would have suited equally well for a church with its cushions and pews. The luxurious bed was reached by three steps set off by an estrade and draped with two curtains of green moire of showy pattern, called *ramages,* probably because the birds they take the place of are supposed to sing. The folds of these enormous curtains were so stiff that at night one would mistake the silken tissue for metal. On the green velvet ornamented with gold tracing, at the foot of the seigneurial couch, the superstition of the Comtes d'Hérouville had fastened an imposing crucifix, whereon their chaplain placed a fresh bit of blessed boxwood, each day at Eastertide, when he renewed the holy water at the foot of the cross.

By the side of the chimney stood a chest of precious wood, magnificently made, such as young couples receive from their tenants on their nuptial day. These old chests, so much sought after, to-day, by antiquarians, were the wardrobes where the women packed away the treasures of their rich and elegant apparel. They held the laces, the petticoats, the

high collars, the reception gowns, the almoners, the masques, the gloves, the veils—in fact, all the inventions of sixteenth century coquetry.

On the other side, for the sake of symmetry, was a like piece of furniture, in which the Countess deposited her books, papers, and jewels. Some damask armchairs, and a large greenish mirror, made in Venice, and richly framed in a kind of movable dresser, completed the furnishing of the room. The floor was covered with a Persian rug, the richness of which testified to the Count's gallantry. On the uppermost step leading to the bed stood a small table, on which the chambermaid served each night, in a cup of silver or gold, a beverage prepared from spices.

When we have entered upon a course in life, we realize the secret influence our position exerts upon the soul. Who, indeed, has not experienced dark moments when certain intangible but hopeful signs are seen in the things that are round about? Happy or sad, the man makes something significant out of the smallest objects; he needs them, and consults them, so naturally superstitious is he.

At this moment, the Countess allowed her gaze to wander from one piece of furniture to another, as though they were living beings. She seemed to demand succor and protection from them. But the sombre articles of luxury appeared inexorable.

Suddenly the fury of the tempest was redoubled. The young woman dared augur nothing favorable, as she heard the threatenings of heaven, whose every change of weather meant something, in this credulous time, according to the ideas or the habits of each individual. All at once she turned toward the pointed-arch windows at the end of the room; but the diminutive panes and multitudinous leaden plates did not permit her to see the state of the weather, or to reconnoitre for the approach of the end of the world that some greedy mendicants predicted. However, she might readily have believed in these prophecies, on account of the roar of the storm-tossed sea, whose waves, lashing the castle walls, united their

crash with the mighty voice of the tempest, while the foundations seemed to shake.

Although her suffering became continually more intense and cruel, the Countess dared not awaken her husband. Instead, she scrutinized his features, as if despair had counseled her to seek there a consolation contrary to every sinister indication.

If everything about the young woman was ominous, the figure, despite the quiet of slumber, seemed more ominous still. The light of the lamp, flickering in the blast and dying away at the bedside, illuminated the Count's face only at intervals, in such fashion as to simulate on the set features the waverings of an inward struggle. The Countess had much trouble in reassuring herself as to the cause of this phenomenon. Each time a gust of wind threw a ray of light athwart the dread face, bringing out shadows on the numerous seams that characterized it, she thought that her husband was on the point of gazing at her with eyes of unendurable harshness.

The Count's brow, as implacable as the war then being waged between Catholicism and Calvinism, was menacing enough even in slumber. The many wrinkles, graven by a warlike career, gave it a vague resemblance to the vermicular statues that ornament the monuments of the time. Like the white lichen of venerable oak trees, his prematurely grizzled locks were in disorder. Religious intolerance displayed here its passionate brutality. The shape of the nose, resembling the beak of a bird of prey, the dark contours and creases about the tawny eye, the prominent bones on the furrowed face, the rigidity of the deep creases, the scorn expressed by the lower lip—every detail indicated an ambition, a despotism, and a strength to be feared, since the narrowness of the skull betrayed an absolute lack of wit and a bravery that knew no generosity. The features were horribly disfigured by a large scar running crosswise and giving the appearance of a second mouth in the right cheek.

At the age of three-and-thirty the Count, anxious to distinguish himself in the unhappy religious war evoked by the

Massacre of Saint Bartholomew, had been wounded severely at the siege of La Rochelle. The mishap of his wound—to follow the speech of the day—augmented his hatred against the heretics; and, by a rather natural resentment, he included in his antipathy men who were handsome. Before the accident he was already so homely that no lady cared to receive his attentions. The one passion of his younger days had been for a well-known woman called La Belle Romaine. The distrust aroused in him by reason of his fresh disfigurement, brought him to the point of believing that he would never be able to inspire a genuine passion; and his disposition became so savage that, if he had any success in gallantry, it was due to the terror caused by his cruelty.

The left hand, placed by this terrible man outside the coverlet, finished the delineation of his character. Extended in such a way as to guard the Countess, like a miser guards his treasure, this enormous hand was covered with hairs so thick, it presented a network of veins and muscles so remarkable, that it resembled the branch of a beech tree enveloped by stems of yellow ivy.

A child would have recognized in the Count one of the ogres of the terrible stories that are told them. It was only necessary to see the width and length of the place occupied by him in the bed to appreciate his gigantesque proportions. His heavy, grizzled eyelashes hid his pupils in such way as to heighten the gleam of his eye, where blazed the bright ferocity of a wolf at bay in the thicket. Under his lion-like nose his upper lip was concealed by two large moustachios, little looked after, for he neglected his toilet sadly. Luckily for the Countess, the cavernous mouth of her husband was silent at this moment, since the softest tones of the raucous voice made her shudder.

Although the Comte d'Hérouville was scarcely fifty, at first glance one would take him for sixty, so greatly had the hardships of war wrought upon his features, without, however, impairing his robust constitution. But he cared nothing at all to pass for a "mignon."

The Countess, who was in her nineteenth year, formed a pitiable contrast by the side of this burly figure. She was pallid and slender. Her nut-brown hair, streaked with gold, dallied with her neck like the russet clouds that set on the delicate features affected by Carlo Dolci for his ivory-tinted Madonnas, who seem ready to expire under the attack of physical grief. You would have said that this was the apparition of an angel commanded to mollify the will of the Count.

"No, he will not slay me!" she cried inwardly, after a long contemplation of her husband. "Is he not frank, noble, brave, and true to his word?—True to his word!"

As she mentally repeated the phrase, she trembled violently, and paused as if in a stupor.

To make one understand the horror of the Countess' situation, it is necessary to add that this nocturnal scene took place in 1591, at a period when France was in the throes of civil war, and the laws were of no avail. The excesses of the League opposed to the accession of Henry IV., far exceeded the disaster attendant upon the religious wars. License was carried to such a pitch that no one was surprised to see a great lord kill his enemy publicly at high noon. When a military expedition for personal interest was conducted in the name of the League or of the King, it obtained from one party or the other the heaviest backing. Thus it was that Balagny, a common soldier, became almost a sovereign prince in the borders of France.

As for murders committed within one's own family—if this expression may be permitted—they would be noticed no more than the cutting of a sheaf of straw (so said a contemporary writer)—that is, unless they were accompanied by particularly atrocious circumstances. Some time before the King's death, a lady at court killed a courtier who had made some unseemly remark about her. Upon which one of Henry III.'s favorites said to him:

"'Fore heaven, sire, she thrust him quite prettily!"

By virtue of his summary methods, the Comte d'Hérouville,

one of the most enthusiastic Royalists in Normandy, held, subject to Henry IV., all the portion of the province that borders upon Brittany. The head of one of the wealthiest families of France, he had increased his holdings considerably by the many lands he had gained in a marriage, seven months previous to the night on which this story commences.

Jeanne de Saint-Savin, the bride, was a young lady who, by a chance common enough in the time when people died like flies, had suddenly become sole heiress of the properties of both branches of the Saint-Savins. Terror and necessity were the only witnesses of this union with d'Hérouville.

Two months afterwards, at a dinner given by the town of Bayeux to the Count and Countess d'Hérouville, a discussion was raised, which was very absurd in this time of ignorance. It related to the legitimacy of children coming into the world ten months after the death of the husband, or seven months after wedlock.

"Madame," said the Count to his wife, brutally, "I do not care whether or not you give me a child ten months after my death. But, for your safety, do not bear a child in seven months."

"What would you do about it, you old bear?" asked the young Marquis de Verneuil, thinking that the Count was indulging in a pleasantry.

"I would wring the necks of both mother and child, quickly enough."

So peremptory a rejoinder choked off this discussion, imprudently brought up by a lord of Lower Normandy. The guests kept silence and looked with a species of terror at the pretty Countess d'Hérouville. Every one was convinced that, in the supposed event, the ferocious lord would carry out his threat.

The Count's speech had sunk deep in the breast of the young woman, for she was even then with child. At that instant one of those presentiments, that light up the soul like a glint of the future, warned her that she would bear a seven-months child. An inward fever enveloped the young woman

from head to foot, centering her life at her heart with such violence that outwardly she felt as if plunged into an icy bath.

From that time on, not a day had passed without its impulse of secret fear that halted the most artless ebullitions of her soul. And now the memory of that look and accent accompanying the Count's threat again chilled the Countess' blood and made her silence her pains, as, leaning over that sleeping head, she tried to discover, during slumber, some indication of a pity she vainly sought during his waking hours.

The child, threatened with death before its birth, demanded the light of day by a vigorous movement. In a voice more like a sigh, she cried:

"Poor little being!"

She said no more. There are some thoughts a mother cannot endure. Incapable of reasoning, just now, the Countess was suffocated by an unknown anguish. Two tears escaped from her eyes, trickled slowly down her cheeks, and remained poised at the lower part of her pale face, like twin dew-drops on a lily.

What learned man would undertake to say that the child was in a neutral state where the mother's emotions could not penetrate, during those hours when the soul dominated the body and communicated its emotions, and when the thought imbued the blood with restorative balm or poisonous fluid? Does the terror that agitates the tree trouble the fruit? Was the expression, "Poor little being!" called forth by some vision of the future? The mother's trembling was most severe, her look most piercing.

The Count's menace was a link mysteriously connecting the woman's past with this premature child-birth. His odious suspicions, so publicly expressed, had shed terror into the memory of the Countess, which reëchoed even into the future. Since that ominous feast, she had dispelled—with as much dread as another woman would have had pleasure in evoking them—a thousand shifting scenes depicted in spite of her by her lively imagination. She denied herself the agitating thoughts of the happy days when her heart was free to

love. Like the songs of a native land that bring tears to the eyes of the exile, these memories induced sensations so delightful, that her tender conscience reproached her for them as for a crime; while her imagination rendered doubly terrible the threat of her husband. This then was the secret of the horror which oppressed the Duchess.

The sleeping figure had a sort of mildness due to the unbroken rest of both body and mind; and although the peacefulness made little change in the hard features, the illusion formed so attractive a mirage to the hapless creature that she at last found hope in the calmness. The tempest without had unburdened itself of torrents of rain, leaving no sound save a melancholy murmur. Her fears and griefs had likewise obtained a moment of respite.

While gazing at this man with whom her life was joined, the Countess allowed herself to indulge in a reverie so intoxicating in its delight that she could not break the spell. In an instant, by one of those visions that partake of Divine power, she called in review the flitting images of a happiness lost forevermore.

She saw at first, though dimly and as in the far-away dawn, the modest château where were spent her light-hearted days of childhood. There was the grassy lawn, the dancing brook, and the little room—the scene of her early joys. She beheld herself culling the flowers and planting them, without understanding why they all faded in spite of her diligence in watering them. Then appeared a confused vision of a great town and a fine weather-stained mansion where her mother took her at the age of seven. Her rollicking memory pointed out the hoary-headed tutors who worried her. In the midst of a torrent of Spanish and Italian sentences, and songs inwardly repeated to the strain of a rebeck, she recalled her father's figure. On his return from court she ran out to meet the president, watched him dismount from his mule, led him by the hand up the steps, and by her chatter drove away the judicial cares he was not always able to lay aside with his black and red robe, while her romping smoothed away the intermingled pallor and gloom furrowed in his brow.

She devoted a single glance to her aunt's confessor, the Father Superior of Clarisses, a stern, fanatical priest whose duty it was to initiate her into the mysteries of religion. Hardened by the rigor displayed toward heretics, the old priest continually jangled the chains of hell, spoke only of the wrath of heaven, and made her panic-stricken by assuring her that she was always in the presence of God. At last she became so timid that she dared not raise her eyes, and paid nothing more than dutiful heed to her mother, with whom, until then, she had shared her childish pleasures. From that moment, a religious terror seized upon her young heart, as she fancied she saw the well-beloved mother fastening her blue eyes upon her with a trace of anger in their depths.

Then suddenly she found herself in that other childhood, when she as yet understood nothing of the mysteries of life. She remembered with a regret, tinged with irony, the days when her entire happiness consisted of working with her mother in a little tapestried room, praying in a church, singing a ditty, and accompanying herself on the rebeck, furtively reading a book of chivalric adventure, tearing a flower to pieces out of curiosity, hunting for the presents that her father was to give her on the feast of St. John, her patron saint, and seeking the meaning of sentences left unfinished in her presence.

But all these were quickly blotted out by another memory, like a written word from an album—all the infantile delights, which in this moment of respite, her imagination had led her to choose from the pictures afforded by the first sixteen years of her life. The charm of that limpid sea was eclipsed by the splendor of this fresh though turbulent memory. The joyous peace of her childhood carried with it less solace than a single month of the troublous months in the last two years of her life—years rich in treasure that must ever remain buried in her heart.

The Countess came suddenly to that rapturous morning when, at the far end of a great parlor, done in carven oak, which was used for a dining-room, she saw her handsome

cousin for the first time. Alarmed by the riots at Paris, his mother's family had sent the young courtier to Rouen, in the hope that he would learn from his grand-uncle the duties of the magistracy that were to devolve upon his own shoulders one day. The Countess smiled involuntarily at the thought of the celerity with which she had disappeared again, on seeing her father in company with a stranger. Despite her small delay in opening and closing the door, her single glance had impressed the scene so clearly upon her soul, that now her cousin appeared again as distinctly as upon that day when he turned. At that time she had admired only the careless taste and evident costliness of his Parisian clothes. But now—grown bold in her memory—her eye wandered freely from the velvet mantle, violet in color and brocaded with gold and lined with satin, to the spurs that adorned his boots; and from the pretty oblong slashes on his doublet and small-clothes to the rich, drooping collarette that allowed a glimpse of a fresh throat as white as the lace. She stroked a face set off by two small mustachios, turned up at the ends, and a *royale* like one of the little tufts of ermine on her father's cape.

In the silence of the night, with her eyes fixed on the moire curtains that she could not see, forgetful of both the storm and her husband, the Countess dared to recall how, after many days that seemed as long as years, so full were they, the garden surrounded by its dingy wall, and her father's dark-colored mansion, seemed gilded and resplendent. She loved; she was loved! She remembered how, fearing the severe looks of her mother, she had glided one morning into her father's study to make her youthful confession to him; and how, after seating herself on his knee, and indulging in little bits of playfulness that had caused a smile—much desired by her—to flit across the lips of the eloquent magistrate, she had said to him:

"Will you scold me if I tell you something?"

And she fancied she yet heard her father say, after getting her to tell, for the first time, of her love:

"Very well, my child, we shall see. If he studies faithfully,

and desires to take my place, and continues to please me, I may lend my aid to your mighty plot!"

She had not waited to hear more. She had kissed her father and turned over everything in her haste to reach the linden tree, where, each morning, before her dreaded mother was awake, she kept tryst with the gentle Georges de Chaverny.

The courtier promised to obey the laws and requirements. He forsook the rich habiliments of knighthood to don the magistrate's stern garb.

"I love you best in black," said she.

She was fibbing, but the deceit made her lover less regretful at having thrown away his sword.

The remembrance of the ruses employed to deceive her mother, whose severity seemed formidable, recalled the mutual joys of an innocent passion. It was at some trysting-place under the lindens, where words had fewer listeners, and where were exchanged the furtive embraces, the stolen kisses, in short, all the artless stock in trade of a passion that never overstepped the bounds of modesty. Living again, as in a dream, in the delightful days when she accused herself of having more than her share of joy, she dared to kiss the dream-face of the youth set in flaming glances, and the red lips that had spoken so well of love.

She had loved Chaverny, though he was not rich. But what a wealth of treasure had she not discovered in the soul as gentle as it was strong!

Then had come the death of her father, the president. Chaverny did not succeed him. The fires of civil strife had intervened. Through the efforts of her cousin, she and her mother had found a secret retreat in a little town of Lower Normandy. Soon thereafter the successive deaths of several relatives had left her one of the richest heiresses of France.

But with the increase of fortune came the flight of happiness. The savage and terrible figure of the Count d'Hérouville, who demanded her hand, came like a thundercloud that casts its dark emblems of mourning over the treasures of earth, till then gilded by sunlight. The poor Countess

tried to pass by the scenes of despair and the tears shed in her long resistance. She saw in a confused blur the burning of the little town; she saw Chaverny the Huguenot cast into prison, menaced with death, and awaiting a dreadful torture. She came to that momentous evening when her mother, pale and dying, cast herself at her feet.

Jeanne alone could save her cousin. She yielded.

It was night. The Count returning blood-stained from a combat, found his prey secured. He conjured up a priest, torches, a church! Jeanne appeared in all her woe. Hardly was she permitted a word of farewell with her rescued cousin.

"Chaverny, if you love me, never see me more!"

She heard the footfall of her noble lover die away in the distance. She saw him no more. But in the depths of her heart she cherished that last look of his, seen again so often and so radiantly in her dreams.

Like a cat locked in a lion's cage, the young wife had lived in constant dread of her master's claws, ever upraised against her. She felt it a crime when, on certain days set apart because of some unexpected pleasure, she put on a gown which carried her back to the moment when she first beheld her lover. But to be happy in the present, she would have had to bury the past and think no more of the future.

"I do not think myself guilty," she thought; "but if I appear so in the eyes of the Count, is it not as bad as though I were? Perhaps I am! Did not the Holy Virgin conceive without——?" She paused.

While her thoughts were thus hazy and her soul journeyed in the realm of fancy, her innocence led her to ascribe to the last glance, wherein her lover shot his whole life, the power exercised by the visitation of the angel on the Holy Mother. This conjecture, worthy of the artless days to which her meditation had carried her, vanished before the remembrance of a conjugal scene more hateful than death. The hapless Countess could no longer doubt the legitimacy of the child. The first night of her married life appeared to her in all the horror of the torture chamber, bringing in its wake many other nights and the saddest of days.

"Ah! poor Chaverny!" she cried to herself, tearfully. "You were always so tender, so gracious, so considerate!"

She turned her eyes toward her husband, as if to persuade herself once more that this face would promise the pity so dearly bought.

The Count was awake. His yellow eyes, as bright as a tiger's, glittered under his tuft-like brows; and never was his gaze keener than at this moment. The Countess, alarmed at having encountered his glance, slipped under the counterpane, and lay motionless.

"What are you crying about?" asked the Count, quickly pulling away the cover.

The voice, always terrifying to her, had a softened accent at this moment that seemed a good omen to her.

"I am in great pain," she answered.

"Well, my pet, is it any crime to be in pain? Why do you tremble when I look at you? Ah! what can one do to be loved?"—All the wrinkles on his forehead clustered between his brows.—He sighed and added: "I am a continual cause of fear to you, I know full well."

Following the instinct of feeble natures, the Countess interrupted him by moans of pain.

"I fear a miscarriage," she cried. "I ran about over the rocks all the afternoon, and probably tired myself out."

As she said this, the Count looked at his wife so suspectingly, that she blushed and shuddered. He took the fear he inspired in the artless creature for the remorse of sin.

"Perhaps it is an actual accouchement that has set in," he said.

"Well?"

"Well, in any case, we must have a skilled practitioner, and I shall go after one."

The threatening air accompanying the words froze the Countess. She fell back on the bed, uttering a sigh called forth more by presentiment than by the pangs of labor. The moaning satisfied the Count as to the truth of his suspicions. With an affected calm that his accents and gestures belied,

he arose precipitately, threw about him a robe he found on an armchair, and locked a door, next the chimney, which communicated with the drawing-rooms by way of the grand staircase.

Upon seeing the key in her husband's possession, the Countess feared the worst. She heard him open the door opposite the one he had just fastened, and depart to another room where the Counts d'Hérouville slept when they did not honor their wives with their noble company. The Countess knew only by hearsay of the purpose of this room; jealousy kept her husband ever by her side. If any military excursions compelled him to forsake his honored bed, the Count would turn over the castle to more than one Argus whose constant espionage bespoke his hateful distrust.

In spite of the close attention paid by the Countess to the faintest sound, she could hear nothing more.

The Count had reached a long gallery adjoining his room and running the length of the western wing of the château. The Cardinal d'Hérouville, an enthusiastic collector of printed books, had amassed here a library remarkable for its many handsome volumes; and prudence had led him to place in the walls one of those inventions due to solitude or monkish fear. A silver chain connected, by means of a hidden wire, with a gong suspended by the bed of a trusted retainer. The Count pulled the chain, and a squire of his guard was not long in making resound the noise of his boots and spurs on a winding stair in the lofty turret that flanked the western corner of the château, on the side next the sea. Upon hearing the servant approach, the Count unfastened the iron springs and bolts securing the secret door leading from the gallery to the tower, and admitted into this sanctuary of knowledge a man-at-arms whose appearance betokened a servant worthy of his master. The squire, half asleep, seemed to have walked up by instinct. The horn lantern he carried lighted the long corridor so dimly that he and his master were outlined in the gloom like two apparitions.

"Saddle my charger at once—and you are to accompany me!"

The order was given in so guttural a voice that it put the servant at once on the alert. He looked up at his lord and encountered a glance so piercing that he recoiled as from an electric shock.

"Bertrand," added the Count, placing his right hand on the squire's arm, "you may leave your breast-plate and put on the uniform of a captain of the Spanish Guards."

"*Vive Dieu!* monseigneur—disguise myself as a Leaguer! Pardon me, I will obey; but I would as soon be hanged!"

Flattered in his weak point, the Count smiled. But to efface the smile, which made a sharp contrast with his general expression, he replied roughly:

"Get a horse spirited enough for you to keep pace with me. We will fly like bullets from an arquebus. Be in waiting without. I will ring."

Bertrand bowed in silence and departed. But when he had gone down a few steps, he said to himself, as he heard the moaning of the storm:

"By the Rood, all the devils have been let loose! I would have been surprised if this one had remained quiet. It was on just such a night as this that we stole a march on Saint-Lô."

In one of the rooms the Count found a costume that had often served him in strategy. He donned a shabby doublet, that looked as though it had belonged to one of the poor troopers paid so seldom by Henry IV., and then he returned to the chamber where his wife lay moaning.

"Try to endure your pain," said he; "I will kill my horse if necessary, in order to procure relief for you the more quickly."

The words contained no threat, so the emboldened Countess was on the point of questioning him, when he suddenly inquired:

"Can you tell me where you keep your masks?"

"My masks?" she replied. "*Bon Dieu!* What do you want with them?"

"Where are your masks?" he repeated, with his usual fierceness.

"In the chest," she answered.

The Countess could not repress a shudder on seeing her husband choose from among them a half-mask, which was worn as commonly at that time as the ladies of to-day wear gloves. The Count became utterly unrecognizable when he put on a tattered gray felt hat, set off by a shabby cock-feather. He buckled around his waist a large leathern girdle under which he thrust a dagger, not usually carried by him. The wretched garb lent him so formidable an aspect, and he came toward the bed with so suspicious a manner, that the Countess believed her last hour had come.

"Ah! do not kill us! Leave me my child, and I will love you dearly!"

"You must feel guilty indeed to offer me as a ransom for your misdeeds the love that is due me."

The Count's voice rang hollow under the velvet hangings. His bitter words were accompanied by a look as heavy as lead and crushing the Countess as it fell upon her.

"O God above!" she cried sadly, "then is innocence a deadly sin?"

"Your death is not being sought," replied her husband, emerging from the reverie into which he had fallen; "but you must do precisely, and through love for me, what I demand of you at this moment."

He cast one of the masks upon the bed, and smiled commiseratingly at her gesture of involuntary terror at the gentle shock of the black velvet.

"You will give me a puny child!" said he. "Have the mask over your face by the time I get back. I will not suffer any churl to boast of having seen the Countess d'Hérouville."

"Why call in a man for this office?" she asked in a low tone.

"Forsooth, my dear, am I not master here?" he rejoined.

"What matters a mystery more or less?" said she, despairingly.

Her lord had disappeared, so this exclamation was made without temerity; though often her oppressor kept tab on her doings as far as the fear of his victim reached.

In one of the brief lulls in the storm's fury, the Countess heard the tramping of two horses that seemed to be flying across the treacherous sands and rocks on which the old castle stood. The echo was quickly lost in the sound of the waves.

She was alone—a prisoner in a gloomy apartment, shut in by a night now silent, now threatening, and powerless to ward off a danger that she imagined was hastening upon her. She racked her brain for some scheme to save her child, the creature conceived in tears and already become her consolation, her chief concern, the future centre of her affections, her single and frail hope. Sustained by a mother's courage, she went to seize the small bugle which served her husband to summon his retainers, opened the window and made the brass utter a shrill blast that died away on the wide expanse of water, like a bubble launched in air by a child. Then she realized the futility of this unknown call, and began to wander from one side of the room to the other, in the hope that all the exits were not secured. She reached the library and sought vainly there for some secret passage. She scrutinized the long rows of books, reached the window nearest the court of honor, made the echoes resound with the notes of the horn, and struggled unavailingly with the shriek of the elements.

In her despair she was moved to confide in one of the maid-servants, all retainers of her husband; but, upon going into the oratory, she discovered that the Count had fastened the door leading to their apartments. She was filled with dread. All the precautions taken to isolate her betokened a purpose to proceed without witnesses to the execution of some terrible crime.

In the measure of her ebbing hope came anguish more keen and burning. The presentiment of possible death, uniting with the fatigue attendant upon her movements, sapped her remaining energy. She was like a shipwrecked sailor who succumbs, overwhelmed at last by a billow less violent than any he has overcome.

The dizzy pangs of labor made her lose count of the passing hours. Finally, when she felt herself on the point of being brought to bed, alone and unaided, and her terrors were joined to the fear of accident due to inexperience, the Count suddenly and noiselessly appeared on the scene. He seemed like a demon who, on the expiration of a compact, had come to claim his own. He growled savagely on seeing her face still exposed; but, after adjusting her mask skillfully enough, he carried her in his arms and placed her on the bed in her room.

The fright caused by this apparition and her seizure made the Countess forget her suffering for the moment. She glanced furtively at the actors in this mysterious scene, but did not recognize Bertrand, who was as carefully masked as her husband. After hastily lighting some candles, whose rays mingled with the first beams of the morning sun reddening the window-panes, the servant went over and deposited himself in a corner by the window. There, with his face turned to the wall, he appeared to be estimating its thickness, and he maintained an immobility so complete that he might have been mistaken for a statue.

In the centre of the room the Countess perceived a dumpy, little man, puffing for breath, whose eyes were bandaged and whose features were so distorted by terror that it was impossible to guess his usual appearance.

"'Sdeath, my worthy scoundrel!" said the Count, restoring to the individual in question his sight, by a sudden motion that knocked the stranger's bandage down on to his neck, "beware of looking at any other object than the wretched creature on whom you are to use your skill; otherwise, I shall pitch you into the river that flows beneath yonder casement, after having put on you a collar of precious stones weighing a hundred pounds or more!"

And he made a slight turn around the body of his stupefied listener with the handkerchief that had served as a bandage.

"First, see if it is a miscarriage; in that case your life is

answerable for hers. But if the child is born alive, you are to bring it to me."

Upon concluding this injunction, the Count seized the hapless leech by the middle, lifted him like a feather, and placed him in front of the Countess. Then the lord took up his station in the bay of a window, and drummed the pane with his fingers, his eyes, meanwhile, wandering from his servant to the bed and then to the sea, as though he were mentally consigning the babe to a watery cradle.

The man whom the Count and Bertrand had so violently snatched out of the sweetest slumber that ever closed a wretched mortal's eyes, and fastened to the crupper of a horse that he believed to be pursued by all the demons of hell, was a personage whose countenance was characteristic of the time, and whose influence, moreover, was to be felt in the House of Hérouville.

At no time was the better class more ignorant regarding natural science, or were the crafty astrologers held more in esteem, for never was there a keener desire to pierce the future. This ignorance and general curiosity had led to the greatest confusion in human knowledge. Everything devolved upon personal practice, since nomenclature was still lacking to theory. Printing was very expensive, so scientific dissemination proceeded slowly. The Church still persecuted the investigations of science, based on the analyzation of natural phenomena. Persecution begat mystery. At that time, with the masses and classes alike, the terms physician and alchemist, mathematician and astronomer, astrologer and necromancer were all six used indiscriminately to designate a doctor. The best doctors were supposed to cultivate magic, and, while healing disease, to cast horoscopes. These soothsayers, moreover, were protected by princes to whom they read the future, and in whose palaces they were sheltered and pensioned. The famous Cornelius Agrippa, who had come to France to attend Henry II., did not want to foretell the future, as Nostradamus had done, so he was dismissed by Catherine de' Medici, and succeeded

by Cosmo Ruggieri. Men in advance of their day, who delved in science, were little understood; all inspired the general terror for occult sciences and their accruing results.

Without being exactly one of these celebrated mathematicians, the man whom the Count had pounced upon enjoyed in Normandy that doubtful reputation attaching to a doctor who is given over to mysterious research. He was a kind of sorcerer, still called by peasants in several parts of France a *rebouteur* (bonesetter). The name is bestowed upon untrained practitioners who, without apparent study, but through inherited aptitude, and often through long practice, and the resulting observations accumulated in a family, can set bones—that is, they set dislocated joints, splint broken limbs, cure certain ailments in man and beast, and possess prescriptions, supposedly marvelous, for the treatment of severer cases.

Not only had Maître Antoine Beauvouloir—for that was the name of the *rebouteur*—inherited important traditions from his grandfather and father, two famous practitioners, but he had also received a schooling in medicine. He was devoted to the sciences. Country people found his study full of books and queer things that gave to his success a tinge of magic. Without passing for a sorcerer exactly, Antoine Beauvouloir engendered, for thirty leagues around, a respect bordering on terror. And—what was far more dangerous to him—he had at his disposal the secrets of life and death which concerned the nobles of the land. Like his grandfather and father, he was noted for his skill in labor cases, abortions, and miscarriages. And, in this troublous time, error was so frequent and passion so evil that even the highest aristocratic families were obliged often to let Maître Antoine into shameful and terrible secrets. His discretion was thoroughly relied upon, for it was essential to his own welfare; so his clientèle paid him handsomely, and his inherited fortune had augmented considerably.

Always on the road—sometimes captured as he had just been by the Count; sometimes compelled to spend several days

in attendance upon some great lady—he was not yet married. Indeed his reputation had prevented several maids from marrying him. Above seeking solace in the chance meetings brought about by his profession, which gave him so much influence with feminine frailty, the poor *rebouteur* felt fitted for the joys of family life, without being able to attain them.

This good man hid an excellent heart under the deceptive appearance of a jolly temper, in keeping with his fat face, his rotund body, the agility of his short, stout frame, and the freedom of his speech.

What he desired, then, was to marry and to have a daughter who would bestow his property on some indigent nobleman; for he did not particularly fancy his station in life, and wished to remove his family from the position where it was subject to the prejudices of the time.

Nevertheless, he took very kindly to the festivity and feasting that rewarded his greatest operations. The fact of always being the principal guest everywhere, had added to his constitutional liveliness a dose of solemn vanity. Even his impertinence was condoned in critical moments, when he was pleased to operate with a certain magisterial deliberateness. For the rest, he was as inquisitive as a nightingale, as greedy as a greyhound, as talkative as are diplomats, who never let out state secrets. Setting aside these faults, developed in him by the varied adventures into which his calling had thrown him, Antoine Beauvouloir passed for being the best-natured fellow in Normandy. Although he belonged to the cultured few who were superior to their time, the good sense of a Norman countryman counseled him to keep to himself the ideas he had acquired and the truths he had discovered.

On finding himself placed by the Count before a woman in labor, the *rebouteur* recovered all his presence of mind. He began to feel the pulse of the masked patient, without giving her a thought; but while carrying on this professional pretence he could and did think of his own situation. In none of the base and criminal intrigues, where force had made him

a blind agent, had such precautions been taken as in the present case. Although his death had been considered more than once, as a means of assuring the success of sundry schemes in which willy-nilly, he had been implicated, never had his life been compromised to such an extent as it was at this moment. Above all things he resolved to study his present clients, and learn as much as he could of the extent of his danger, in order to save his blessed skin.

"What is the trouble?" he asked in an undertone, while placing the Countess in such posture as to receive the benefit of his skill.

"Do not let him have the child!" she said huskily.

"Speak out!" thundered the Count, preventing Maître Beauvouloir from hearing the last word of the victim; "otherwise," added he, still disguising his voice religiously, "say your *In manus!*"

"Cry out," said the *rebouteur* to the lady, "cry, or, by the mass! this man's necklace of precious stones will become you no better than me! Courage, little lady!"

"Not so roughly!" exclaimed the Count.

"Monsieur is jealous!" retorted the operator in a low, sharp voice that, happily, was lost in the Countess' cries.

Luckily for Maître Beauvouloir's safety, Nature showed herself lenient. It was more of an abortion than a child-birth, so tiny was the babe; and the mother's suffering was not unbearable.

"By the Blessed Virgin!" cried the inquisitive doctor, "here is no miscarriage!"

The Count stormed and stamped the floor till the boards trembled. The Countess pinched the operator.

"Ah, I see!" thought Maître Beauvouloir. "It should have been a miscarriage then?" he said inquiringly, and in an undertone, to the Countess, who replied by a nod, as though this gesture were the only language that could express her thoughts.

"All this is not yet quite clear," mused the doctor.

Like all skilled practitioners, the doctor could easily tell

a woman who was undergoing child-birth for the first time. Although the modest inexperience of her movements revealed the innocence of the Countess, the crafty operator exclaimed:

"Madame stands it like she was used to it!"

The Count maintained a calmness more terrifying than his anger. He merely remarked:

"Give me the child!"

"No, for God's sake! do not give it to him!" cried the mother in a tone almost savage, that aroused in the little man's heart a heroic kindness attaching him, more than he thought possible, to this child of noble birth thus disowned by its father.

"The child is not born yet. You are making an idle clamor," replied Beauvouloir coldly, while he kept the tiny babe out of sight.

Surprised to hear no cries from it, the *rebouteur* looked the babe over and thought it already dead. The Count perceived the trick, and was upon him at a single bound, cursing fiercely.

"Will you give it to me when I tell you?" he cried, seizing the innocent victim, which thereupon uttered feeble wails.

"Have a care! It is newly born and almost unformed," said Beauvouloir, staying the Count's arm. "A seven-months' child, no doubt."

Then, with a superior strength given him by a sort of inspiration, he held the father's fingers and muttered in his ear, in a broken voice:

"Spare yourself the crime; it will not live."

"Scoundrel!" exclaimed the Count, from whose grasp the doctor had freed the infant, "who said I was going to kill my child? Did you not see that I was merely fondling it?"

"Then wait till he is eighteen before fondling him that way," retorted Beauvouloir, regaining his sense of importance. "But," he added with a thought to his own safety, for he had just recognized d'Hérouville, who, in his excitement, had forgotten to disguise his voice, "baptize it at once and say nothing of this happening to its mother, else you may cause her death."

The secret joy betrayed by a gesture on the Count's part when he heard that the child would not live, had suggested this remark to the *rebouteur,* and had saved the child's life. Beauvouloir made haste to carry it back to the mother. She had swooned away. He pointed to her with an ironical gesture in order to frighten the Count by the condition into which their controversy had plunged her. The Countess had heard it all; it is not uncommon, in the great crises of life, for the sense to develop an amazing keenness. Nevertheless, the cries of her child, placed on the bed, restored her to life as if by magic. She fancied she heard the voices of angels when, under cover of the infant's wailing, the *rebouteur* said in her ear:

"Be very careful with him and he will live a hundred years. Beauvouloir knows what he is talking about."

A heavenly sigh, a silent pressure of the hand were his reward. Before handing the fragile being, whose skin yet carried the impress of the Count's fingers, over to the impatient mother, Beauvouloir sought to satisfy himself that the paternal caress had not deranged its puny system. The frenzied manner in which the mother clasped her child to her heart, and the threatening look she shot at the Count through the eye-holes of her mask, made the doctor shudder.

"She will die if she loses her son too suddenly," he remarked to the Count.

During the latter part of this scene, the Sire d'Hérouville seemed to have seen nothing, heard nothing. Motionless and apparently lost in a profound reverie, he had resumed his drumming on the window-pane. But, upon hearing the final remark, he turned upon Beauvouloir in a gesture of uncontrollable frenzy, and drew his dagger.

"Wretched lout!" he cried, bestowing upon him a term of contempt used by the Royalists against the Leaguers, "impudent scoundrel! Science, which has accorded you the honor of being the assistant of gentlemen compelled to increase or cut off their issue, hardly restrains me from depriving Normandy of her sorcerer forever!"

Here, to Beauvouloir's great relief, the Count rammed his dagger violently back into its sheath.

"For once in your life," continued d'Hérouville, "will you find yourself in the honorable company of a lord and his lady, without suspecting them of underhand actions that you condone in a churl, never considering that with him they are not made necessary—as in the case of a gentleman—by plausible motives? Can I not have had, just now, state reasons for acting as you thought I was about to act? Kill my son! Take him away from his mother! Where did you get such notions? Am I a fool? Why do you alarm us about the health of the lusty child? Scoundrel! You may as well understand my scorn for your braggadocio. If you had learned the name of the lady, you would boast of having seen her. *Pasques-Dieu!* You would probably have killed both mother and child by excessive precaution. But bear this in mind: Your miserable life will be forfeit to me for your close tongue and their own well-being!"

The leech was astounded at the sudden change in the Count's intentions. This access of tenderness toward the infant frightened him more than the eager cruelty and sullen indifference first manifested by the lord. And the latter's tone, in uttering the last phrase, bespoke a more crafty design to reach an unchanged purpose.

Maître Beauvouloir accounted for the unlooked-for change by the different promises he had given the father and the mother.

"I see!" he pondered, "the worthy lord does not want to make himself odious to his wife, and so will rely upon Providence and an apothecary. It behooves me to put the lady on her guard against her noble mountebank."

But just as he turned towards the bed, the Count, who had gone to a chest, stopped him by a peremptory call. On seeing the nobleman hold out a purse to him, Beauvouloir halted in a perfunctory way, but not without an uneasy joy, to take the gold gleaming through a net-work of red silk, and bestowed so disdainfully.

"Even though you have ranked me as a villain, I do not consider that to exonerate me from paying you in a lordly way. Nor do I ask your discretion. My man here"—indicating Bertrand—"has probably made it plain that wherever there are oaks or streams, my diamonds and my collars know how to seek out the louts who chatter about me."

On finishing this merciful speech, the giant slowly advanced towards the interdicted physician, shoved a chair at him noisily, and appeared to invite him to be seated, like himself, by the bedside

"Well, little one, we have a boy at last," he continued; "a good omen for us both. Are you in much pain?"

"No," murmured the Countess.

The surprise and timidity of the mother, and the tardy demonstrations of forced joy on the part of the father, convinced Maître Beauvouloir that some sinister episode was escaping his accustomed penetration. He would not forsake his suspicions, and he placed his hand upon that of the young woman, less to ascertain her condition than to warn her.

"The skin is fresh," said he, "we need look for no evil after-effect. Milk-fever may set in, but do not be alarmed; it will not be serious."

Here the wily *rebouteur* paused and clutched the Countess' hand to attract her attention.

"If you would rest easy on account of your child, madame," he resumed, "you had best never suffer it out of your sight. Let it long partake of the milk that already its little lips are seeking. Nurse it yourself, and keep it from apothecaries' drugs. The breast is the cure for all infantile ailments. I have observed many births of seven-months' children, but seldom have I seen a delivery as painless as yours. But it is not astonishing; the child is so tiny! You could put it in a shoe. I am sure it doesn't weigh five ounces. Milk! milk! If it can but lie always on your breast, you can save it!"

The last words were accompanied by a renewed pressure of the fingers. Despite the two jets of flame that darted through the eye-holes of the Count's mask, Beauvouloir rounded off

his periods with all the solemn imperturbability of a man who wants to earn his money.

"Oho! good leech, you are forgetting your old black hat," said Bertrand as Beauvouloir was departing.

The motives that inspired the Count's clemency towards his son were couched in the *et cetera* of a notary. At the moment when Beauvouloir stayed his hand, avarice and Norman custom were ranged before him. By a sign, the two impulses palsied his fingers and imposed silence upon his evil passions. One cried out: "Your wife's property can only devolve upon the house of Hérouville through the medium of a male child." The other pointed out the Countess dying and the estate reverting back to the collateral branch of Saint-Savin. Both counseled him to leave to Nature the care of removing the puling babe, and to await the birth of a second son who would be healthy and vigorous, enabling him to snap his fingers at his wife and her first-born. He saw no longer a child—he saw domains, and his tenderness became suddenly as strong as his ambition. In his desire to satisfy usage, he wished that this still-born child—as he thought—might have had a seemingly robust constitution.

The mother, who was well informed as to her husband's character, was still more surprised than the leech, and preserved an instinctive caution that approached boldness, at times, for in a moment a mother's courage had doubled her strength.

For several days the Count remained very assiduously by his wife's side, showering her with attentions that interest made almost tender. The Countess speedily divined that she alone was the object of all these attentions. The hatred of the father toward his child showed itself in the smallest details. He did not allow himself to see or touch it. He arose brusquely and went to give orders at the moment when its cries were heard. In short, he seemed to condone its existence in the hope of seeing it die.

But this dissimulation was too great an effort for the Count. When he perceived that the mother's knowing eye discerned

without fathoming the danger that threatened her son, he announced his departure on the morrow of the Countess' churching, his pretext being to lead his combined forces to the relief of the King.

Such were the circumstances which accompanied and preceded the birth of Étienne d'Hérouville. Even though the Count had not had a powerful motive for desiring incessantly the death of his disowned son in the fact that he had already connived at it; even though he might have quelled that gloomy tendency which causes men to persecute a being already afflicted; even though he had not been under the necessity, so distasteful to him, of feigning affection for a detested, ill-timed child whom he believed to be Chaverny's—the hapless Étienne would have been none the less the object of his aversion. The misfortune of a rickety and sickly body, mayhap aggravated by his caress, was in his sight a flagrant and unending offence against the pride of a father. If he detested handsome men, he abominated, none the less, debilitated ones, whose strength of physique had been replaced by intellectual force. In order to suit him, one must be ugly of feature, tall, strong, and ignorant. Étienne, whose weakness dedicated him in some sort to the sedentary pursuits of the scholar, must perforce find his father to be an enemy absolutely without magnanimity. His struggle with this colossus began from the cradle; and his only ally against so dangerous an antagonist was his mother's love, that grew ever greater, through a touching law of nature, in proportion to his peril.

Buried suddenly in profound solitude by the Count's abrupt departure, Jeanne de Saint-Savin owed to her child the only semblance of happiness that could brighten her life. This child, whose birth had brought her reproach on account of Chaverny, was loved by the Countess, as other women love the child of a lawless passion. Though obliged to nurse it herself, she was never weary. She desired no help in any way from her maids. She dressed and undressed her child, finding continual delight in each little office that he demanded.

These incessant duties, this attention at every moment, the regularity with which she awoke at night to nurse the child were limitless joys for her. Happiness glowed on her countenance while she obeyed the demands of the little creature. As Étienne had been born prematurely, several of his garments were lacking. These she desired to make herself, and did make, with that dexterity known to you, mothers in anticipation, who in the shadow and silence have toiled for adored infants. Each needleful of thread was a memory, a desire, a wish, a thousand things sewed into the cloth like the pretty designs she placed there.

All these follies were duly told to the Count d'Hérouville, and augmented the storm already gathered. The days seemed as short as hours to the manifold occupations and minute cares of the mother; they fled by laden with inward content.

The bone-setter's warning remained ever present with the Countess. She would not entrust her child to the care of any of the servants. She would have preferred not to sleep in order to be certain that no one came near Étienne. He slept by her side. In short, his cradle was tended by distrust.

While the Count was away she dared to send for the surgeon, whose name she had remembered. She regarded Beauvouloir as a person to whom she owed an immense debt of gratitude. But, above everything else, she had a thousand questions to ask him about her child. If anyone should try to poison Étienne, how could she foil the attempt? How foster his feeble health? How long till she could safely wean him? If she were to die, would not Beauvouloir look after the poor little one?

Beauvouloir was genuinely touched by the queries of the Countess, and confessed that he too had feared poison for Étienne. But the Countess had nothing to fear so long as she nursed him. After he was weaned, she was advised to taste Étienne's food.

"If, Madame la Comtesse," he added, "you should ever have a peculiar taste on your tongue, of anything pungent, bitter, strong, briny, or otherwise unusual, reject the food.

As for the child's clothing, have it washed in your presence, and keep the key to the chest wherein you keep it. Finally, if anything happens, send for me."

The *rebouteur's* kindness was graven deep in Jeanne's heart. She prayed him to depend upon her for one who would ever be ready to serve him. Then Beauvouloir told her that she held his well-being in her hands.

He briefly related to the Countess how the Seigneur d'Hérouville, in default of fair and noble lady-loves to favor him at court, had loved in his youth a courtesan known as *La Belle Romaine,* who had formerly been the mistress of the Cardinal of Lorraine. She was abandoned by the Count not long afterwards, and came to Rouen to appeal to him on behalf of a daughter, whom he never wished to hear about, claiming that the child's beauty was cause enough for disowning her. On the death of this woman, who perished miserably, the poor child, Gertrude by name, and still more beautiful than her mother, had been sheltered at the convent of Clarisses, whose Mother Superior was Mademoiselle de Saint-Savin, the Countess' aunt.

Having been called to attend Gertrude, Beauvouloir had fallen desperately in love with her.

"If Madame la Comtesse would but interest herself in this affair," concluded he, "it would not only repay the debt she thinks she owes, but would also make me deeply her debtor."

It would also justify his coming to the castle—a somewhat dangerous proceeding when the Count was there. Then, sooner or later, the Count would become interested in so beautiful a child, and might perhaps conserve Beauvouloir's interests by making him his physician.

The Countess—sympathetic toward all true lovers—promised to further the poor doctor's suit. And she did, in fact, follow up the affair so warmly that, when her second child was born and the custom of the time authorized her to demand a favor from her husband, she obtained a dowry for Gertrude, who thereupon married Beauvouloir, instead of becoming a nun. Her dowry and the leech's savings enabled him to pur-

chase Forcalier, a pretty little estate bordering upon the lands of Hérouville.

Thus reassured by the good doctor, the Countess felt her life filled by joys unknown to other mothers. Assuredly all women are beautiful as they hold their babes to their breasts and thus soothe the childish sorrows and hush the feeble cries; but it would be hard to find, even in Italian pictures, a scene more touching than this of the Countess bending over Étienne, while she felt as though her very life's blood was becoming the life of the poor hunted creature. Her face beamed with affection as she contemplated the beloved child, though ever in fear lest she should find in him some resemblance to Chaverny, of whom she had dreamed too much. These thoughts, uniting with the expression of pleasure on her brow; the look by which she seemed to shield her son; her longing to imbue him with the strength which animated her heart; her glittering hopes and gentle gestures—all formed a picture that captivated the waiting-woman. The Countess vanquished her spies.

Soon these two feeble natures were united by a common thought, and understood each other before speech was established between them. When first Étienne used his eyes with the blankness natural to children, his glances encountered the dark-hued panels of the state-room. As soon as his young ear attempted to grasp sounds and detect their difference, he heard the monotonous roar of the sea, as the waves broke upon the rocks with clockwork regularity. And thus the surroundings, the sounds, the objects—everything that strikes the senses, molds the character and fashions the will, inclined him toward melancholy. Was not his mother destined to live and die amid the clouds of sadness? From his very birth, he might have believed the Countess to be the only being on earth; he might have looked on the world as a desert, and accustomed himself to the thought of self-reliance that enables one to live in solitude, to look for happiness within one's own heart and to develop the untold treasures of thought. Was not the Countess condemned to dwell alone

and to find her all in all in her son, who, like her lover, was doomed to persecution?

Like all children who are a prey to disease, Étienne maintained almost always that passive attitude which—sweet resemblance—was so like his mother. The sensitiveness of his system was so marked that a sudden noise or the presence of a turbulent person would throw him into a sort of fever. You might have said that he was one of those tiny insects, for whom Providence seems to moderate the fierceness of the wind and the heat of the sun; since, like they, he yielded unresistingly, uncomplainingly, to everything that appeared to oppose him. This angelic patience inspired in the Countess a deep emotion that effaced all the weariness of the exacting duties demanded of her by a health so wavering.

She returned thanks to God for placing Étienne in an environment of peace and quiet—the only one in which he could have thrived. Often the mother's hands, so tender for him but so strong on occasion, would lift him to an exalted position in the arched window, whence his eye, blue like his mother's, seemed to study the immensity of the sea. And the two would spend whole hours in contemplating the infinitude of that vast sheet, by turns dull or brilliant, noisy or silent. These continued meditations were for Étienne a secret apprenticeship in sadness. Frequently the mother's eyes would fill with tears, and during these gloomy broodings of the soul the small features of Étienne resembled a light net sunken by too heavy a weight.

It was not long, however, till his precocious discernment of sorrow taught him the power his childish play exerted over the Countess; he tried to divert her by the same caresses which had served her to soothe his suffering. And never did his diminitive, impish hands, his chattering, or his knowing smiles fail to chase away her silent care. If he were tired his instinctive consideration for her hushed his complaining.

"Poor, sensitive darling!" cried the Countess, on seeing him fall asleep from sheer weariness after a romp indulged in to divert one of her gloomiest reveries, "where will you live

Who will ever understand you—you whose tender soul would be wounded by an unusually stern look?—You who, like your sad-hearted mother, value a gentle smile more highly than all the wealth of earth? Angel, your mother loves you, but who will love you in the world? Who will guess the treasure hid in this fragile form? No one! You will remain in solitude on the earth; just as I. Heaven keep you from conceiving a love like mine, favored of God but thwarted by men!"

She sighed. She wept. The graceful attitude of the slumbering child upon her knee caused her to smile through her tears. For a long time she gazed upon him, experiencing those delights that are a secret between mothers and God.

Noticing how greatly her voice, accompanied by the notes of a mandolin, pleased him, she sang the charming ballads of that day, and thought she beheld upon his little lips the self-same smile by which Georges de Chaverny was wont to thank her when she laid aside her rebeck. She reproached herself for thus recalling the past, but she continually reverted to it. And the child, innocent accomplice of her dreams, smiled at the very airs that Chaverny had liked.

When eighteen months old, Étienne was still too frail to be taken outside the house; but the faint pink tingeing the white skin, like the fairest of wild-rose petals wafted by the wind, bore witness already of health and life. Just as she was beginning to believe in the predictions of the doctor, and priding herself on having been able, in the Count's presence, to protect her child by the strictest precautions and shield him from every danger, she received letters from her husband's secretary announcing his speedy return.

One morning the Countess, given over to that doting joy common to all mothers when they see their first-born taking his earliest steps, was playing the little games with Étienne, as indescribable as the charm of memory, when suddenly she heard the floor creak under a heavy tread. She raised up involuntarily, by a startled movement, and found herself face to face with the Count. Involuntarily, she uttered a cry, but tried to retrieve the blunder by advancing toward him and presenting her upturned brow for a kiss.

"Why did you not tell me you were coming?" said she.

"In that case," he interposed, "the greeting would have been more cordial, but less frank."

He turned toward the child. The state of its health drew forth a fleeting gesture of surprise mingled with rage; but he quickly repressed his anger, and began to smile.

"I bring you good news," he continued, "I have the jurisdiction over Champagne, and the King's promise to be a duke and a peer of France. Besides, we have inherited a kinsman's fortune; that cursed Huguenot, Chaverny, is dead."

The Countess turned pale and dropped into an armchair. Now she understood the secret of the sinister joy that overspread his visage; and the sight of Étienne seemed to add to it.

"Monsieur," she said, in broken tones, "you are not unmindful that I have long loved my cousin, Chaverny. You shall answer to God for the grief you are causing me."

The Count's looks kindled at this speech. His lips quivered and he could not utter a word, so stirred was he by rage. He dashed his dagger on the table with such violence that the iron rang like a clap of thunder.

"Listen!" cried he, towering up, "and heed well my words: I want never again to see or hear of the little monster you hold in your arms, for it is your offspring and none of mine. Has he a single one of my features? By the Lord and all the saints! Keep him out of my sight well, or else——"

"Just heaven, protect us!" exclaimed the Countess.

"Silence!" replied the colossus. "If you wish him to receive no hurt at my hands, take care that I never find him in my way."

"Then swear," said the Countess, whose courage was aroused to struggle with the tyrant, "that you will not kill him if he does not cross your path. Can I trust to your word as a gentleman?"

"What is all this about?"

"Then kill us both, now—together!" she cried, falling on her knees and clasping her child to her breast.

"Rise, madame! I promise upon my honor as a gentleman not to seek the life of this cursed embryo, provided that he lives on the cliffs by the seashore below the castle. I will give him the fisherman's cottage for a dwelling and the strand for his domain. But woe to him, if I catch him outside those limits!"

The Countess shed bitter tears.

"But see! he is your son!"

"Madame!"

At this word the frightened mother carried away her child, whose heart was beating like that of a bird caught in its nest by a shepherd boy.

Whether this spectacle of innocence had charms that even the harshest nature could not withstand, or whether the Count reproached himself for his violence and feared lest he should plunge into too great despair a creature needful alike to his happiness and to his designs, his voice was as gentle as it could possibly be, when his wife returned.

"Jeanne, my dear," said he, "do not bear me ill will, but give me your hand. One never knows how to manage you women. I bring you fresh honors and increased wealth, and, *pardieu!* you greet me like a miscreant fallen among clowns! My duties as governor will compel me to be gone long, ere I can return to Normandy; so, sweetheart, give me cheery countenance while I stay here."

The Countess understood the drift of his speech, so the pretence of gentleness did not deceive her.

"I know my duty," she replied, with a melancholy accent that her husband took for tenderness.

This timid being was too pure and too noble to attempt—like some adroit women—to manage her husband by calculating conduct, a species of prostitution by which lofty souls have been sullied. She retired quietly to solace her despair by walking with Étienne.

"By all that is holy! Then I shall never be loved!" cried the Count, as he surprised a tear in his wife's eye, just as she turned away.

The mother-love, thus constantly menaced, became with the Countess a passion as violent as the guilty emotions of some other women. By a kind of magic, of which every mother has the secret, and which was of surpassing power between the Countess and her son, she succeeded in making him understand the ever-present peril that threatened him, and taught him to avoid his father. The terrible scene he had witnessed was graven in Étienne's memory; it wrought upon him like a fever. At last he could detect the presence of the Count with such certainty that if one of those faint smiles that gladdened the mother's eyes animated his face when his immature senses, already schooled by fear, advised him of his father's approach, his features would contract; and the ear of the mother was not keener than the instinct of her son.

As he grew older, this faculty, created by terror, became as predominant as that of the Indian. Étienne could distinguish his father's step, knew his voice, and could tell his approach a long way off.

When the Countess saw the feeling of dread, inspired in her by her husband, shared also by her son, it made the child still more precious in her eyes; and their union was strengthened like that of two flowers attached to the same stem, bent by the same breeze, and quickened by the same impulse.

It was a single life.

After the departure of the Count, Jeanne was expecting another child. At the end of the period demanded by custom, she bore, amid much suffering, a lusty infant that afterwards developed so perfect a resemblance to his father, as to cause the Count's hatred for his eldest son to wax still greater.

In order to protect her favorite child, the Countess consented to all the Count's plans for the comfort and fortune of his second son. Étienne, promised a Cardinal's hat, was destined for a priest, so that he might not interfere with the succession of the lands and titles of the House of Hérouville to Maximilien. This, then, was the price by which the mother secured peace for the Hated Son.

Never were two brothers more unlike than Étienne and Maximilien. The youngest had an inborn taste for noise, violent exercise, and strife; the Count, therefore, had as much love for him as his wife had for Étienne. By a kind of natural and tacit agreement, each of the parents looked after the favored son. The Duke—for by this time Henry IV. had rewarded the eminent service of Seigneur d'Hérouville—did not wish, as he said, to overtax his wife, so he had Beauvouloir procure, as Maximilien's nurse, a buxom woman of Beauvais.

To Jeanne's great relief, he distrusted her influence as much as her nursing, and decided to rear the child after his own fashion. He brought up the boy to have a holy horror of books and letters. He taught him the technical side of military life, training him at an early age to mount a horse, shoot an arquebus, and draw a dagger. As he grew older, he was taken with the chase, so that he might contract that coarseness of speech, rudeness of manner, strength of body, and alertness of look and accent that made a man accomplished in the Count's eyes.

At twelve, the little lord was an ill-licked lion's whelp, feared as much as his father, who gave him permission to tyrannize—as he did—everybody on the place.

Étienne dwelt in the house down on the shore, that his father had given him, and his mother had fitted up in such manner as to give him some of the comforts that were his right. The Duchess spent the greater portion of the day there. Together the mother and the child wandered over the rocks and strand. She showed Étienne the boundaries of his little domain of sand, shells, sea-weed, and pebbles. The deep terror that seized her, when she saw him go beyond the prescribed limits, made him realize that death awaited him on the other side. Étienne trembled for his mother before he trembled for himself. Soon, the mere name of the Duke aroused within him a hysteria that left him powerless and a prey to the wild abandon of a young girl who falls prostrate before a tiger. If he perceived the sinister giant in the distance, or heard his voice, the unhappy impression was revived that had frozen

his heart when he was first disowned. So, like a Laplander who cannot exist apart from his snows, he made a delightful native land out of his cabin and cliffs; and if he went beyond the frontier, he was seized with an indefinable uneasiness.

When the Duchess saw that the poor child could find happiness only in this humble, silent sphere, she became more reconciled to the fate that had been imposed upon him. She took advantage of the enforced vocation to round out his life and people his solitude with the lofty occupations of science; she employed Pierre de Sebonde to visit the château and act as tutor to the future Cardinal d'Hérouville. Despite the tonsure destined for her son, she did not wish that his education should be purely that of a priest, but, at her instance, it was secularized, and Beauvouloir was commissioned to initiate Étienne into the mysteries of natural science. The Duchess herself looked over the studies, in order to gauge them to his strength, and derived much satisfaction by teaching him Italian and gradually unfolding to him the poetic riches of that tongue.

While the Duke led Maximilien into conflicts, at the risk of seeing him wounded, the Duchess was guiding Étienne along the Milky Way of the Sonnets of Petrarch, or into the immense labyrinth of the "Divine Comedy."

To compensate Étienne for his infirmities, Nature had endowed him with a voice of such melody that it was hard to resist the pleasure of its tone. His mother taught him music. Songs tender and sad, sustained by the notes of a mandolin, were a favorite recreation promised him by his mother as a reward for some task required by the Abbé de Sebonde. Étienne listened to her with a passionate admiration that she had never seen in any other than Chaverny.

The first time that the poor woman recalled her girlhood in the long look of her child, she covered him with involuntary kisses. And she blushed deeply when Étienne asked her how it was that she appeared to love him better at that moment. She replied that every hour brought added love. Thus ere long she found, in the care demanded for the education of the

spirit and the training of the soul, the same delight that she had experienced while nursing and tending the bodily growth of her son.

Although mothers do not always keep pace with their sons, the Duchess was one of those who carry in their motherhood the meek adoration of love; at the same time, she could correct and criticise. She made it a point of pride to render Étienne superior to herself in everything, and not to govern him. It may be that she knew herself so strong in her unquenchable love, as to be proof against belittlement. Some souls there are, devoid of affection, that love to domineer; but true sentiment fosters abnegation, the virtue of the strong. When Étienne would not at first understand some demonstration, a text, or a theorem, the doting mother, who assisted with his lessons, seemed to wish to impart the knowledge directly, as formerly, at his least cry, she nursed him at her breast. And what a burst of joy overspread her features when Étienne finally grasped the problem and made it his own! She illustrated the saying of Pierre de Sebonde that a mother is a dual being whose sensations include two existences.

Thus the Duchess strengthened the natural affection binding a son to his mother, by the tenderness of a revivified passion. Étienne's delicacy of frame caused her to continue for several years the attention given in his infancy. She came to dress him, she put him to bed; none but she combed and smoothed, and curled, and perfumed his hair. The toilet was a constant caress; she gave to the beloved head as many kisses as light strokes of the comb. In the same way that a woman likes to make herself almost a mother to her lover by serving him in some domestic way, this mother made of her son a sort of lover. She discovered in him a vague resemblance to the cousin loved beyond the tomb. Étienne was like a phantom of Georges, seen in the far-away depths of an enchanted mirror. She assured herself that he was more of a gentleman than a churchman.

"If some woman, as loving as I, would but imbue him with the life of love, he might still be happy!" she mused more than once.

Then the portentous interests which demanded the tonsure for Étienne's head came vividly into her memory, and she kissed and bathed in tears the locks so soon to be clipped by the scissors of the church. But, in spite of the unjust agreement entered into with the Duke, she saw Étienne as neither priest nor cardinal, in the rifts the mother's eye could open along the dark vistas of the future. The utter forgetfulness of the father allowed her to postpone the dreaded orders.

"There will always be plenty of time," she said to herself.

Then, without confessing a thought, buried in her heart, she trained Étienne in all the refined manners of courtiers; she wished him to be as gentle and sweet-tempered as Georges de Chaverny had been. Reduced to a slender allowance by the ambition of the Duke—who himself managed the estate, utilizing all the revenues in display for himself or his train—she had adopted for herself the simplest garb, in order to be able to bestow upon her son velvet cloaks, high boots trimmed in lace, and rich doublets finely slashed. Her personal privations excited in her that delight of sacrifice concealed from those we love. It was a pleasure to her to think, while she embroidered a collar, that one day it would adorn her son's neck. She alone had the care of his clothing, his linen, his perfumes, and his toilette; and she dressed herself only for him, for she liked to appear to good advantage by his side.

So much care, accompanied by a sentiment that seemed to enter into her son's very flesh and there live again, had its reward. One day Beauvouloir—that worthy man who had made himself so helpful to the hated son, and whose services, indeed, were not passed over by Étienne—the doctor, whose disturbed glance made the Duchess shiver whenever he examined her fragile idol, declared that Étienne would live to a good old age, provided no violent emotion agitated the delicate organism.

Étienne was then sixteen.

At that age he was five feet tall, a height that he never exceeded. But Georges de Chaverny had been no taller. His skin, as transparent and smooth as a little girl's, allowed one to

see the faintest branching of his blue veins. His pallor was that of porcelain. His clear blue eyes, stamped with ineffaceable sweetness, seemed to implore the protection of men and women alike; the ingratiating mildness of the supplicant escaped from his glance and obtained him favor before his melodious voice had wrought the charm. The sincerest modesty shone forth in every feature. His long chestnut locks, glossy and fine, were parted in two waves on his forehead and curled at the ends. His cheeks, pale and sunken, and his pure brow slightly wrinkled, indicated an inherited suffering, pitiful to behold. His pleasing mouth, with its white teeth, preserved the peculiar fixed smile that is seen on the lips of the dying. His hands, white as a woman's, were remarkably well-formed and pretty. A protracted brooding had made him incline his head like an etiolated plant, and this stoop conformed with his general appearance; it was the last touch on a portrait given by a great artist to enhance its meaning. You might have fancied this to be a young invalid girl's head placed on the frail body of a stunted man.

The poetic moods whose wealth of reflection cause us to hasten, like botanists, over the vast fields of thought; the fertile contrast of human ideas, the inspiration given by perfect intelligence to works of genius, had become the inexhaustible and tranquil pleasure of this dreamy, solitary life. Flowers, the charming creations whose fate so much resembled his own obtained his undivided love.

His mother was delighted to see her son actuated by these innocent passions that would keep him from the rude contact of social life, which he could no more have withstood than the frailest of ocean fishes can endure the sunlit beach. She encouraged these tastes in Étienne, bringing him Spanish romances, Italian stories, books, sonnets, poems. The library of the Cardinal d'Hérouville was a rich heritage for Étienne, as reading was the measure of his life.

Every morning the child found his solitude filled with beautiful, richly-colored plants of delicate perfume. Thus his studies, which his feeble health would not permit for any

length of time, and his walks over the cliffs were interrupted by artless meditation that halted him for full hours before the smiling blossoms, his gentle comrades; while, sheltered in some rocky crevice before a seaweed, moss, or lichen, he pondered over the mystery of life. He would seek a poem in the heart of some fragrant cone, as a bee plunders it of its honey. Often he would admire, without knowing why and without wishing to fathom his pleasure, the delicate tracery of a deeply tinted petal, the daintiness of the rich gold and azure, green and violet tunics, the varied and beautiful shapes of calices and leaves, their smooth or velvety texture, rending—as his soul would be rent—at the smallest touch.

Later in life, thinker as well as poet, he began to understand the reasons for those innumerable differences in one and the same nature, and discovered therein the index of peculiar laws; for, day by day, he pierced deeper into the interpretation of the Word, Divinely written upon everything in the universe. Such continued and secret research in the occult realm gave to his habits the apparent torpor of meditative genius. For days at a time Étienne lolled on the sand, happy, and unwittingly a poet. The sudden arrival of a gilded insect, the reflection of the sunlight on the water, the shimmering of the vast, limpid mirror of waves, a shell, a sea-spider—every object became an event and a pleasure to this ingenuous soul.

To see his mother coming, to hear her dress rustling, to wait for her, to caress her, to talk to her, to listen while she spoke, caused such quickened emotion within him, that oftentimes a delay or the slightest anxiety on her account would throw him into a raging fever. All his life was centered in his soul; and, lest the frail and feeble body be destroyed by some lively emotion, Étienne required silence, caresses, peace, and a woman's love. As it was then, his mother was prodigal with love and caresses; the cliffs were silent; the flowers and books charmed his solitude; in short, his little sandy kingdom with subjects of shell, sea-weed and grass, seemed a world ever fresh and strange.

Étienne had all the benefit of absolutely pure, physical existence coupled with a spiritual life poetically untrammeled. A child in stature, a man in wit, he was equally angelic from both viewpoints. As his mother had willed it, his studies had transported his emotions into the realm of the Ideal. His life worked out its course in a sphere of intellect, far removed from the world of social convention that would have caused him suffering or killed him outright. He dwelt in the spirit and mind. After absorbing the thoughts of mortals, by reading, he rose to grasp the underlying principles of nature; he felt them in the air, he saw them blazoned on the sky. In a word, he mounted at this tender age to the ethereal heights, and there found the delicate nourishment needful to his soul—an intoxicating nourishment, however, that predestined him to sorrow upon that day when all this wealth of accumulated treasure should be merged suddenly with the riches that some quick passion would place in his heart.

If at times Jeanne de Saint-Savin dreaded that storm, she soon comforted herself by a thought inspired by the gloomy destiny of her son; for the poor mother found no other remedy for a sorrow than a lesser one. Thus each joy for her was full of bitterness.

"He will be a cardinal," said she to herself, "he will live for the arts and be their patron. He will love Art instead of a woman, and Art will never deceive him."

The joys of this passionate motherhood were unceasingly affected by sombre thoughts brought forth by Étienne's peculiar position in the family. The two brothers had grown up without either having seen the other or suspected his existence. The Duchess had long hoped that, during some absence of her husband, she could bring the lads together, in some memorable way, and enfold them both with her mother's love. She had flattered herself that she might be able to interest Maximilien in Étienne, by telling the younger boy how much love and protection he owed to his older brother, in return for the renunciation to which he had been subjected and to which, though compulsory, he would be true. But this long cherished hope

had vanished. Far from wishing to bring about a recognition between the brothers, she ended by dreading a meeting between Étienne and Maximilien more than between Étienne and his father. Maximilien, who could believe in nothing but evil, would fear that some day Étienne might demand his forfeited rights, and would throw him into the sea with a stone tied around his neck.

Never had a son less respect for his mother. So soon as he could reason he had perceived how small was the esteem in which the Duke held his wife. If the old Governor preserved a semblance of politeness with the Duchess, Maximilien, little restrained by his father, caused her a thousand griefs. So Bertrand watched continually to prevent Maximilien from seeing Étienne, whose very existence was religiously concealed.

All the retainers in the castle cordially hated the Marquis de Saint-Sever, the name borne by Maximilien, and those who were in the secret of the first-born's existence regarded him as an avenger held in reserve by Heaven. The future of Étienne was therefore ominous; perhaps he was to be persecuted by his brother.

The poor Duchess had no relatives to whom she could entrust the life and interests of her beloved son. And as for Étienne, would he not blame his mother when, under the purple robe of Rome, he might desire to be such a father as she had been a mother?

These thoughts, and her melancholy existence so full of hidden grief, were like an illness tempered by a gentle nursing. Her heart craved the most considerate attention, and those who surrounded her were cruelly untutored in gentleness. What mother's heart would not have been borne down unceasingly by the sight of her elder-born, a man of mind and heart betokening genius, despoiled of his rights, while the younger, a man of coarsest fibre and devoid of talent, even military, was destined to wear the ducal coronet and perpetuate the family? The House of Hérouville was abjuring its true glory. Incapable of malediction, the gentle Jeanne de Saint-Savin could only bless and weep; but often would she lift her eyes

to heaven as if to demand a reckoning for this strange mischance. Her eyes would fill with tears when she thought that at her death her son would be left an orphan indeed, and a butt for all the brutalities of a brother devoid of principle and law.

All these repressed emotions, an ever-present first love, all her unnoticed sorrows—for she concealed her keenest anguish from her favorite son—her ever-troubled joys, her incessant grief, had enfeebled her constitution and developed within her a falling sickness that, far from mending, took on an added force day by day. At last a final blow brought consumption. She had tried to enlighten the Duke relative to Maximilien's training and was rebuked. She could find no remedy for the odious germs that were growing up in her son's soul. She declined in health so noticeably that her illness necessitated the promotion of Beauvouloir to the post of physician to the House of Hérouville and the Government of Normandy. So the old leech took up his abode in the castle.

In those days such offices were filled by scholars, who thus found the leisure necessary to the accomplishment of their labors, as well as the needful income. For a long time Beauvouloir had sought this position, for his knowledge and fortune had made him numerous and insidious enemies. Despite the protection of a great family whom he had served in a doubtful case, he had recently become implicated in a criminal lawsuit, that had been stopped only by the intervention of the Governor, at the solicitation of the Duchess. The Duke, indeed, had no cause to repent the public protection he accorded the old *rebouteur*: Beauvouloir saved the Marquis de Saint-Sever from a sickness so dangerous that all other doctors must have given him up.

But the ailment of the Duchess dated too far back to admit of healing, especially when the wound was continually being reopened.

When it was evident that her sufferings were approaching an end for this angel whom so much sorrow had prepared for a happier aftermath, death was hastened by her second-sight into an ominous future.

"What will become of my poor child without me?" was a thought that constantly swept over her like a bitter wave.

When toward the last she was confined to her bed, the Duchess sank rapidly; for she was now isolated from her son, and her pillow was interdicted to him by the agreement for which his life was answerable. The grief of the lad equaled that of his mother. Inspired by the genius peculiar to restrained emotion, Étienne created the most mystic of languages to communicate with her. He studied the inflections of his voice as though he were the must cultured of singers; and he came to sing the saddest of songs underneath his mother's window, when Beauvouloir would signal to him that she was alone. Formerly, in his swaddling clothes, he had gladdened his mother's heart by his knowing smiles; now, become a poet, he caressed her by the sweetest of melodies.

"His songs bring back life!" said the Duchess to Beauvouloir, while inhaling the air that thrilled with Étienne's voice.

At last came a time when a long period of sorrow set in for the hated son. Many times hitherto he had discerned a secret bond between his emotions and the tide of the ocean. The divination of underlying agencies given him by his study of occult science made this phenomenon more significant for him than for another. On the fatal evening when he saw his mother for the last time, the ocean was lashed by an impulse that appeared extraordinary to him. It was an agitation of the waves which indicated some internal disturbance; it upbore mighty billows that broke upon the beach with a mournful sound like the howling of dogs in distress. Étienne marveled, and said inwardly:

"What can the sea want of me? It quivers and moans like a living creature! My mother has often told me that the sea was a prey to the most violent convulsions on the night I was born. What is in store for me?"

The premonition kept him standing before his window, his eyes wandering alternately from the window of his mother's room, where a light flickered, to the ocean, which continued to lament.

Suddenly Beauvouloir tapped softly, opened the door and displayed a face overcast by anxiety.

"Monseigneur," said he, "Madame the Duchess is in such a sad state that she wishes to see you. Every precaution has been taken to shield you from harm in the castle; but we shall have to be exceedingly wary, for we will be obliged to go through the Duke's room—where you were born."

Tears sprang into Étienne's eyes.

"The sea was warning me!" he cried.

He allowed himself to be led mechanically toward the door of the turret that Bertrand had ascended on the night of Étienne's birth. The squire was found on guard, lantern in hand. Étienne reached the great library of the cardinal, where he was obliged to remain with Beauvouloir, while Bertrand went ahead to open all the doors and ascertain whether they could pass through without danger. The Duke did not awake. Étienne and Beauvouloir advanced cautiously, hearing no sound in all the immense château save only the feeble plaint of the dying woman.

Thus were the circumstances attendant upon the birth of Étienne repeated at the death of his mother; the same tempest, the same anguish, the same fear of awaking the pitiless giant who, this time, slept soundly. To avoid mishap, the squire took Étienne in his arms and crossed the room of his formidable master, prepared to give some excuse based on the Duchess' condition, in the event he were surprised.

Étienne felt his heart contract violently at the fear that inspired these two faithful servants, but his emotions prepared him, as it were, for the scene that met his gaze in the seigneurial chamber, where he returned for the first time since the day of his banishment by paternal malediction.

On the great bed that happiness had avoided he sought his well-beloved mother, but could hardly see her, so emaciated was she. As white as the clinging lace, and almost at her final breath, she collected her final energy to take Étienne's hands, while she tried to bequeath him all her soul in her eyes,

just as, in the long ago, Chaverny had given all his life to her in a look of farewell.

Beauvouloir and Bertrand; the child and the mother; the slumbering Duke—all were reunited. It was the same place, the same scene, the same actors; but instead of the joys of maternity came funereal woe—the night of death instead of the morning of life. At this moment the storm, foretold since sunset by the complaining breakers, broke forth in sudden fury.

"Dear flower of my life," said Jeanne de Saint-Savin, kissing her child's forehead, "you entered the world in the midst of a tempest, and in a tempest I leave the world. Between these two all else has been storm, save the hours when I was with you. And now my final joy is blended with my final sorrow. Farewell, my only love! Farewell, sweet image of two souls soon to be united! Farewell, my one, my perfect joy! Farewell, my best-beloved!"

"Ah! Let me go with you!" said Étienne, who had lain down beside his mother.

"It would indeed be a happier fate!" said she, and two tears rolled down her pale cheeks, for, as at other times, her glance seemed to pierce the future. "No one saw him come?" she asked the two servants.

At this moment the Duke moved. They all trembled.

"Even my last joy is interrupted!" said the Duchess. "Take him away! Take him away!"

"Mother mine, I would far rather see you a moment longer and then die!" said the hapless child, and sank fainting on the bed.

At a sign from the Duchess, Bertrand took Étienne in his arms, and, allowing the mother a last glimpse of him while she kissed him with her expiring gaze, the servant stood ready to carry him away at a sign from the dying woman.

"Love him well!" said she to the squire and *rebouteur*, "for I see no other protectors for him save you and heaven."

Led by an instinct that never deceives a mother, she had perceived the profound sympathy felt by the squire for the

elder son of a powerful house, for which he had a feeling of veneration comparable to that of the Jews for the Holy City. As for Beauvouloir, the understanding between the Duchess and him had existed for many years. The two retainers, touched at seeing their mistress obliged to leave the noble child in their care, promised by a solemn sign to watch over their young master, and the mother relied on the silent gesture.

The Duchess died in the morning, a few hours later. She was mourned by her servants, who gave expression to the only eulogy she received at the tomb, by saying that she was a "winsome lady come down from Paradise."

Étienne fell a prey to the deepest, most protracted grief—a silent one. He no longer wandered over the crags; he had no further energy to read or to sing. He would spend entire days under the shelter of a rock, unmindful of the raw atmosphere, fixed upon a granite boulder like the moss that grew there. He wept rarely, but remained lost in a single thought, as wide and limitless as the ocean. And, like the ocean, that thought took on a myriad form—now terrible, now stormy, now tranquil.

It was more than grief; it was a new life, an irrevocable decree of fate that forbade this fair creature ever again to smile. There are some sorrows that, like blood cast upon running water, tinge the fluid but for a moment; a fresh wave comes and restores the purity of the surface. But with Étienne the source itself was affected, and each new wave of time brought him the self-same bitter draught.

Bertrand had continued to oversee the stables, in his old age, in order not to forego some sort of authority in the establishment. His cottage was not far from Étienne's, and he thus found it possible to watch over the boy with that steadfast affection and wily simplicity characteristic of old soldiers. He laid aside all his rough exterior when he addressed the child. When the weather was stormy he would go gently to arouse him out of his reverie and bring him to his own cottage. He took a pride in filling the Duchess' place—if not

with equal love, at least with the same consideration, that was akin to love. Étienne accepted the steward's attentions without complaint or resistance; but too many ties had been broken between him and other human beings to permit a strong affection to spring up again in his heart. He mechanically allowed himself to be cared for, and became, in fact, a kind of creature midway between man and plants, or, perhaps, between man and God. To what shall a being be likened, who is ignorant of social laws, and the false sentiments of the world, and who maintains a delightful innocence while obeying only the promptings of his heart?

Nevertheless, in spite of his brooding sadness, he soon felt the need of being loved, of having another mother, a twin soul. But, cut off from mankind by a wall of brass, it would have been hard for him to find such another flower-like being. From the habit of seeking another self to whom he could confide his thoughts, and whose life could be merged in his, he finally came into a close sympathy with the sea. It became for him a living, thinking creature. Ever in the presence of that huge creation whose hidden wonders contrasted so greatly with those of the land, he delved to the depths of many mysteries. Familiar from his cradle with the infinitude of the vast liquid fields, the sea and the sky told him many tales of entrancing poesy.

For him there was constant change in this huge scene, apparently so monotonous. Like all whose souls lord it over their bodies, he had a piercing eye and could discern at very great distances, with wonderful ease, the most fleeting effects of light, the most ephemeral agitation of the water. In a perfect calm he was still able to detect the manifold tintings of the sea, which, like the countenance of a maiden, had an appearance of smiles, of moods, of whims—there green and gloomy, here the most smiling blue, blending brilliant streaks with the doubtful glow of the horizon and wavering in subdued charm under orange clouds. He was guest at the magnificent ceremonies attendant upon the going down of the sun, when the evening star shed its crimson rays on the waves like a pur-

ple mantle. For him the sea was sprightly, animated, soulful, at midday, when it danced and repeated a beam of light upon untold, glittering facets. It revealed a fathomless melancholy, and made him weep when, resigned, calm, and sad, it reflected a leaden sky burdened with clouds.

He had mastered the silent language of this vast creation. Its ebb and flow were like a melodious respiration; each sigh expressed some significant emotion to him. No mariner, no weather-wise man could have predicted more clearly the faintest anger of the ocean or the slightest change upon its surface. From the way the surf died on the strand, he could foretell a tempest, a squall, the state of the sea, and the strength of the tide.

When night spread its veil athwart the sky, he still saw and communed with the ocean in the dimness of twilight. He shared its fruitful life. His own soul was stirred by a tempest when it lashed in fury. He inhaled its anger in the whistling of the gale. He kept pace with the huge breakers that crashed into a thousand dripping streamers over the rocks. He felt himself to be as intrepid and terrible as the billows, collecting his energy, as they did, for a prodigious onward sweep. He respected their mournful silence, he imitated their bursts of pity. In a word, he had wedded the sea, it was his confidant, his love.

In the morning, when he came out upon the cliffs and wandered over the fine, gleaming sand of the beach, he understood at a glance the ocean's mood. While comprehending its expanse, he hovered over the great deep like an angel descended from heaven. If its mood were joyous and playful, it greeted him with a fine network of pale mist, like a veil over an affianced maiden's brow; and he would follow its frolic and caprice with a lover's joy, as much delighted to find the sea coquetting like a woman aroused but still half asleep, as a husband at sight of his young wife in the beauty that makes her pleasing to him.

His thought, wedded to this great Divine thought, consoled him in the solitude; and the thousand and one impulses of his

soul peopled his narrow desert with sublime fancies. He had at last discovered, in all the movements of the sea, its close relation with celestial mechanism, and understood the harmonious unity of nature, from the blade of grass to the shooting stars that seek, like grains of sand whirled before the wind, a final resting place in some ethereal realm.

Pure as an angel is pure, free from the emotions that degrade mankind, artless as a child, Étienne lived thus like a sea-gull, or a flower, prodigal alone with the treasures of his poetic imagination, and the knowledge almost divine, of which he alone understood its fertile extent. Incredible admixture of two natures! At times he was transported to heaven by prayer; again he would be meek and lowly, descending almost to the contentment of an animal. For him the stars were the flowers of night, the sun was a father, the birds were friends.

His mother's soul greeted him everywhere; he saw her oftentimes in the clouds, he spoke to her and communicated with her in celestial visions. On certain days he could hear her voice and see her smiling upon him. Indeed, there were days when he had not lost her. God seemed to have given him the power of the ancient hermits, to have endowed him with perfect inward senses that could pierce the heart of things. Some unusual strength of mind enabled him to go deeper into the secret of immortality than other men. His grief and his longing were as bonds uniting him to the spirit world; and forth went he, armed with his love, to seek his mother, realizing thus, by a sublime accord of ecstasy, the symbolic quest of Orpheus. He launched forth into the future or into the sky, as from his craggy fastness he soared over the ocean from one line of the horizon to the other.

Often when ensconced thus in the depths of a cave capriciously hollowed in a granite crag, with an entrance like a burrow, through which the sun's warm rays sent a soft light upon the sea-weeds that festooned the walls, he would fall asleep like some sea-gull in its nest. The sun, his sovereign, was the only one to remind him that he had slept, by marking off the hours that he had neglected his stretches of sea, his gilded sands, his tinted shells.

Across a vista of dazzling splendor, like that of the heavens, he admired the great cities told of in his books. He beheld with wonder, but without envy, the courts, kings, conflicts, multitude of men, and lofty buildings. These midday dreams made ever dearer his gentle flowers, his clouds, his sun, his lordly granite crags. The better to attach him to his lonely life, it seemed as though an angel had revealed to him the abysses of the moral world and the terrible pauses of civilization. He felt that his soul, quickly crushed in that sea of men, would be broken like a pearl that, at the royal entry of a princess, falls from her coiffure into the mire of the street.

II.

HOW THE SON DIED

In 1617, some twenty years after the eventful night when Étienne had entered the world, the Duc d'Hérouville, now seventy-six years old, broken and almost dead, was seated one day at sunset in an immense armchair before the Gothic window, at the very place where the Countess had besought so vainly, by the notes of the horn lost in the air, the aid of men or angels.

One would have mistaken him for some emblem of death. His energetic face, robbed of its sinister look by suffering and age, had a livid hue in keeping with the long tangle of white locks sparsely bestowed over the bald, skull-like, yellow head. War and fanaticism yet shone from his tawny eyes, though tempered by a more religious touch. Devotion gave a monkish tinge that softened the expression once so hard. The last rays of sunset lighted up the still vigorous head by a gentle, ruddy glow. The enfeebled frame wrapped in a brown cloak told, by its heavy attitude and the absence of all movement, of a humdrum existence, the dread repose of this man formerly so adventurous, so vindictive, so active.

"Enough!" said he to his chaplain.

This venerable old man was reading the Gospel, while standing before his master in a respectful manner. The Duke, like one of those aged lions in a menagerie, decrepit but still full of majesty, turned toward another hoary-haired man and gesticulated with a withered arm dotted with hairs and full of nervous rather than muscular energy.

"And now for you, leech," he exclaimed; "see how I am to-day."

"You are doing well, monseigneur; the fever has subsided. You are good for many long years yet."

"I would Maximilien were here," replied the Duke, with a reassured smile. "The brave boy! He is now commanding a company of arquebusiers under the King. The Maréchal d'Ancre has charge of the lad, and our gracious Queen Marie is on the lookout for a fitting mate for him, now that he has been created Duc de Nivron. My name will be perpetuated worthily. The lad has done prodigies of valor in assault——"

Just then Bertrand came in holding a letter in his hand.

"What have we here?" said the old lord quickly.

"A dispatch brought by a courier of the King," replied the equerry.

"The King and not the Queen-Mother!" cried the Duke. "What can have happened? Are the Huguenots in arms again? By all that is holy!" he continued, darting a glance of fire upon the three old men, "I will levy my troops again, and, with Maximilien at my side, Normandy——"

"Calm yourself, my worthy master," said the *rebouteur,* disturbed at sight of the Duke thus working himself into a pitch so dangerous to a convalescent.

"Read it, Maître Corbineau," commanded the old lord, handing the missive to his confessor.

These four figures formed a picture filled with lessons for humanity. The squire, the priest, and the doctor, whitened by years, standing before the master seated in his armchair, exchanged furtive glances fraught with a thought that actuates man on the edge of the grave. The group of silent men standing in a strong ray of the dying sun made a tableau sublime in sadness, rich in contrast. The dark and solemn chamber, undisturbed for five-and-twenty years, was a fitting frame for this poetic page, filled with the embers of passion, overcast by death, imbued by religion.

" 'The Maréchal d'Ancre has been put to death on the Pont du Louvre, by the King's command, and——' My God!——"

"Go on!"

"'Monseigneur le Duc de Nivron——'"

"Well?"

"'Is dead!'"

The Duke's head sank on his breast. He uttered a great sigh and was silent. The three old men looked at one another. The illustrious and wealthy House of Hérouville seemed to be disappearing before their very eyes, like a foundering ship at sea.

"The Master above," said the Duke, darting a fierce look heavenward, "shows himself ungrateful toward me. He is unmindful of the high deeds I did for the Holy Cause!"

"God is avenged!" said the priest, gravely.

"Cast this man into the dungeon!" cried the lord.

"You can silence me more readily than you can your conscience."

The Duc d'Hérouville was lost in thought.

"My house is at an end! My name is extinct!—I must wed again and have a son!" said he, after a long pause.

Frightful as was the look of despair upon the Duke's countenance, the doctor could not repress a smile.

At this moment a song, fresh as the evening air, as pure as the sky, as simple as the ocean tint, rose above the murmur of the waves to charm all nature. The sadness of the tones, the music of the utterance greeted the spirit like a perfume. The melody mounted on the wings of the clouds, filled the air, shed its balm on every grief, or rather soothed them all by giving them utterance. The voice blended so perfectly with the breakers as to seem to arise from the bosom of the deep. The song fell more sweetly upon the old men's ears than the tenderest word of love from a young girl. It carried with it so much devout hope that it resounded in the heart like a voice from heaven.

"What is this?" asked the Duke.

"The song of the little nightingale," said Bertrand. "All is not lost, either for him or for us."

"Whom do you call the nightingale?"

"That is the name we have given to monseigneur's elder son," replied Bertrand.

"My son!" exclaimed the old man. "Then I still have a son —a being who can carry my name and perpetuate my line?"

He arose and began to pace the room with steps now slow, now hurried. Then by a commanding gesture he dismissed his retainers with the exception of the priest.

The following morning, the Duke, leaning on the squire's arm, went the length of the beach and over the cliffs, seeking the son he had formerly cursed. In the distance he saw him, sheltered in a crevice of the granite, idly basking in the sun, his head resting on a tuft of fine grass, his feet gracefully doubled under his body. Étienne reminded one of a swallow at rest. But so soon as the imposing old man showed himself on the seashore, and the tread of his foot mingled faintly with the voice of the surf, Étienne turned his head, uttered the cry of a frightened bird, and vanished under the boulder like a mouse that darts into its hole so quickly that one doubts having seen it.

"Eh! By all that is holy! Where has he stowed himself?" exclaimed the lord, on coming to the rock on which his son had been crouching.

"There he is," said Bertrand, pointing out a narrow rift, whose sides had been polished by the continued pounding of flood tide.

"Étienne, my well-beloved child!" cried the old man.

The hated son made no reply.

For the better part of the morning the Duke entreated, threatened, scolded, and supplicated by turns, without avail. At times he kept silence and applied his ear to the rift, but his feeble sense of hearing brought him only the heavy beating of Étienne's heart, whose violent pulsating reëchoed in the cave.

"He lives, at any rate," said the old man in a broken voice.

At midday the despairing father had recourse to supplication.

"Étienne," he said, "my dear Étienne, God has punished me

for disowning you. He has taken your brother. To-day, you are my one, my only child. I love you more than I love my own soul. I recognize my shortcomings; I know that truly in your veins courses my blood, or that of your mother whose misery was my doing. Come to me! I will try to make you forget my sins by cherishing you for all I have lost. Étienne, you are already Duc de Nivron, and after I am gone you will be Duc d'Hérouville, peer of France, Chevalier of the Orders, and of the Golden Fleece, Captain of a hundred men-at-arms, Grand Bailli of Bessin, Governor of Normandy for the king, lord of twenty-seven domains and sixty-nine towers, Marquis de Saint-Sever. You will have to wife the daughter of a prince. You will be the head of the House of Hérouville. Will you make me die of grief? Come! come! or I shall remain on my knees before your retreat until I have seen you. Your aged father supplicates you and humiliates himself before his son as though he prayed to God himself!"

The hated son did not grasp the tenor of this speech bristling with worldly thought and vanity that was meaningless to him. His soul was only awakened to the impressions of an unconquerable terror. He remained silent, a prey to the most frightful anguish.

When evening came, the old lord, after having wasted every resource of language, every form of supplication and accent of repentance, was smitten by a species of religious contrition. He knelt upon the sand and made this vow:

"I swear to erect a chapel to Saint John and Saint Stephen, patron saints of my wife and my son; I swear to establish a hundred masses in honor of the Virgin, if God and the saints will restore to me the affections of Monsieur le Duc de Nivron, my son here present!"

He remained kneeling in deep humility, praying with hands clasped. But when his son—the surviving hope of his house—did not appear, great tears welled up in his eyes, so long dry, and rolled down the sunken cheeks.

At last Étienne, hearing no sound, crept up on the border of his grotto like a young adder famished for the sun. He

saw the broken, old man in tears; he understood the depth of his grief. He seized his father's hand, kissed it, and said in an angelic voice:

"O mother, forgive!"

In a fever of joy, the Governor of Normandy carried his puny heir in his arms, while the child trembled like a girl who has been seized; and feeling his palpitation, he tried to reassure him by caressing him as tenderly as he would a flower, and uttering gentle words, strangers hitherto to him.

"'Fore God, you are very like poor Jeanne, dear child!" said he. "Tell me your wants; I will give you all you may desire. Be strong! Be well! I will teach you to bestride a mare as kind and gentle as yourself. No one shall oppose you, by all that is holy! everything shall bend before you like a reed before the gale. I give you boundless authority here. I myself will obey you as the head of the family."

The father presently brought his son into the seigneurial room where had been spent the sad life of the mother. Étienne went suddenly to lean against the window where his life had begun, and where his mother had signaled to him the departure of his persecutor, who now, for some reason, had become his slave, resembling one of those huge genii placed by a fairy spell at the command of a young prince. The fairy, indeed, was Feudalism. On beholding again the portentous chamber, whence he had been wont to contemplate the ocean, his eyes filled with tears; the memories of his long illness mingled with the musical thought of the pleasures tasted in the only love bestowed upon him—his mother's love—sank together into his heart and expanded like a poem at once entrancing and fearful. The emotions of that child, accustomed to live in a realm of ecstatic thought, as others dwell in the turmoil of the world, had no resemblance to any of the feelings usual to mankind.

"Will he live?" said the Duke, astounded at the frailty of his heir, over whom he caught himself holding his breath.

"I cannot live elsewhere than here," replied Étienne simply, who had overheard him.

"Well, this room shall be your own, my child."

"What is going on?" asked the young d'Hérouville, hearing a commotion in the castle, in the great hall of which the Duke had summoned his guards in order to present them to his son, never doubting his success.

"Come," replied his father, leading him by the hand into the hall.

In those days a duke and peer of such authority as the Duc d'Hérouville, having his commissions and his government, had a prince's retinue. The younger members of the family were at his beck and call; he had a household and subalterns. The first lieutenant of his company of ordnance had the same relative rank to him that to-day is held by the aides-de-camp of a marshal. Not many years later, Cardinal Richelieu had a body-guard. Several princes allied to the Royal House—the Guises, the Condés, the Nevers, the Vendômes—were attended by pages chosen from among the first families—a final custom of disappearing chivalry. His great wealth and the antiquity of the Norman race indicated by his name (*herus villa,* the chief's house) enabled the Duc d'Hérouville to imitate the magnificence of houses that were his inferiors—such as the Épernons, the Luynes, the Balagnys, the d'Os, the Zamets, who were looked upon then as parvenus, but who, nevertheless, lived like princes.

This then was the spectacle in store for the hapless Étienne —the assembly of retainers in the service of his father.

The Duke ascended to a chair placed under a *solium,* or balcony of carved wood, above a raised dais, whence, in some provinces, certain lords still pronounced sentence—a vestige of feudalism rarely met with, and which disappeared entirely under Richelieu. These species of thrones, something like warder's pews in the church, are now objects of curiosity.

When Étienne found himself there, he shuddered to see himself the object of every eye.

"Do not tremble so," said the Duke, bending his bald head down to his son's ear, "for all of these are in our service."

Through the shadows set off by rays of the setting sun, whose light gilded the windows, Étienne discerned the bailie,

the captains, and the lieutenants-at-arms with their companies of soldiers, the squires, the chaplain, the secretaries, the physician, the major-domo, the body-guard, the steward, the huntsmen, the game-keepers, all the retainers, and the valets. Though they all preserved an attitude of respect, caused by the terror that the old man inspired in the most powerful houses under his jurisdiction in the province, there was a dull murmur of expectant curiosity. The muttering bore down on Étienne's heart, who for the first time felt the effect of a dense atmosphere where a numerous assemblage was breathing. His senses, accustomed to the pure and healthful air of the sea, were offended with a promptness that indicated the perfect poise of his system. A dreadful pulsating, due to some derangement of the valves of his heart, shook his whole frame as by a trip-hammer, when his father, coming forward like a majestic old lion, said solemnly:

"Friends, this is my son, Étienne, my first-born, my heir presumptive, the Duc de Nivron, upon whom the King will undoubtedly settle the commissions of his brother, now deceased. I present him to you in order that you may know him and obey him as myself. I warn you that if any one of you, or any one in the province I govern, shall displease the young Duke, or thwart his smallest behest, it were better for that man, if the deed comes to my knowledge, that he had never been born. You have heard. Return to your several duties, and may God guide you. The last rites over Maximilien d'Hérouville will be conducted here when the body arrives. The household will go into mourning for eight days. Later, we will celebrate the advancement of my son, Étienne."

"Long live Monseigneur! Long live the d'Hérouvilles!" came a shout that seemed to shake the castle.

Footmen brought in torches to light the hall.

The huzzas, the light, and the sensations awakened in Étienne by his father's speech, united to all that he had previously undergone, made the boy swoon. He fell over against the chair of state, allowing his girlish hand to slip into his father's broad palm,

As for the Duke, he had motioned to a lieutenant to come forward, and had said to him:

"Ah! Baron d'Artagnon, I am fortunate in being able to repair my loss; you must meet my son!"

But just then he felt the icy hand laid on his own; he glanced around at the new Duc de Nivron, thought him dead, and uttered a terrified cry that startled the assembly.

Beauvouloir opened the balustrade, took the youth in his arms, and marched off with him, remarking to his master:

"You might have slain him by not preparing him for this ceremony."

"He will not be able to perpetuate the line?" exclaimed the Duke, who had followed Beauvouloir into the seigneurial chamber, where the doctor had put the young heir to bed.

"Well?" said the anxious parent.

"It will amount to nothing," replied the old retainer, showing him that Étienne had been resuscitated by a cordial dropped on a lump of sugar, in those days a new and precious substance worth its weight in gold.

"Take this, you old scoundrel," said the Duke, holding out his purse to Beauvouloir, "and care for him as though he were a king's son. If he dies through fault of yours, I will broil you, myself, on a griddle."

"If you keep on storming so, the Duc de Nivron's death will be at your door," said the doctor, roughly; "leave him, and he will go to sleep."

"Good-night, my best beloved," said the old man, kissing his son's brow.

"Good-night, father," replied the young man in a voice that thrilled the Duke, who heard for the first time the word "father" on Étienne's lips.

The Duke seized Beauvouloir by the arm, led him into an adjoining room and thrust him into the bay of a window, remarking:

"Now, old scoundrel, let us settle matters!"

This pet expression of the Duke's made the old doctor smile; he had long since quit his bone-setting.

"You are well aware," continued the Duke, "that I wish you no ill. You attended my poor Jeanne twice. You brought my son Maximilien through a sickness. In short, you are one of the family. Poor lad! I will avenge him! I will answer for his slayer! The whole future of the House of Hérouville is in your hands. You alone can know if this ill-timed child is able to save our line. You follow me. What do you think?"

"His life by the sea-shore has been so chaste and so pure that nature is more vigorous with him, than if he had lived in the world. But so delicate a body is a very weak servant of the soul. Monseigneur Étienne must choose his own wife, as he will follow the behest of nature rather than your will. He will love innocently, and will accomplish your wishes through the dictates of his heart. Give your son a grand lady, who is like a nag, and he will flee to hide himself in the cliffs. What is more, if some sudden alarm would kill him, I believe that a sudden joy would be no less fatal. To avoid this calamity, I would advise that Étienne be allowed his own way, and own good time, in the paths of love. Give heed, monseigneur; though you are a great and powerful prince, you know nothing of this sort of thing. Give me your entire, unbounded confidence, and you shall have a grandson."

"If I obtain a grandson by any juggling you may do, I will ennoble you. Yes, though it may be difficult to make a courtier out of you—old scoundrel!—you shall become Beauvouloir, Baron de Forcalier. Make use of the green or the dry, the white or black art, the masses of the church or the incantations of the witches—provided that I have a male descendant, all will be well."

"I know a witch's spell that is liable to spoil everything," said Beauvouloir, "and that is yourself, monseigneur. I know you! To-day you will desire an heir at any cost. To-morrow you will insist upon deciding the conditions of the alliance, and you will harass your son."

"God forbid!"

"Very well then, go to court, where the Marshal's death and

the King's release must have turned things topsy-turvy, and where you must have business, were it only to get the Marshal's baton that was promised you. Leave me to manage Monseigneur Étienne. But give me your word as a gentleman to approve of all that I do."

The Duke slapped the old doctor's hand in token of entire compliance, and retired to his room.

When the days of a high and powerful lord are being numbered, the doctor becomes an important personage in the house. So no wonder need be excited at sight of the old *rebouteur* becoming so familiar with the Duc d'Hérouville. Aside from the illegitimate relationship by which his marriage attached him to the great family, and which militated in his favor, the Duke had often sounded the good sense of the scholar, who was one of his favorite advisers. Beauvouloir was the Coyctier of this Louis XI. But, however highly his learning might be considered, the doctor did not wield as much influence over the Governor of Normandy—in whom always lurked the fierce heat of religious wars—as did Feudalism. The retainer, therefore, had divined that the prejudices of the noble would interfere with the wishes of the father. Being the great physician he was, Beauvouloir realized that in the case of so delicate an organism as Étienne's, marriage must be a slow, gentle inspiration imparting new energies and kindling the flame of passion. As he said, to thrust a wife upon Étienne would be to kill him. Above everything, they must avoid frightening the young recluse with a marriage of which he knew nothing, and by disclosing his father's object in view. This unconscious poet could brook only the pure and noble passion of Petrarch for Laura, or of Dante for Beatrix. Like his mother, he was all pure love and soul. He must be given the chance to love, and the result must be awaited, not forced; a command would seal in him the springs of his life.

Now, Maître Antoine Beauvouloir was a father; he had a daughter who had been reared in just such an atmosphere that made her the wife for Étienne. It was so difficult to foresee the

circumstances that would cause a child, destined by his father for a cardinal's hat, to become the heir apparent of the House of Hérouville, that Beauvouloir had never remarked the kindred destinies of Étienne and Gabrielle. It came as a sudden inspiration evolved by his devotion to the two beings rather than through his ambition.

Despite his skill as a surgeon, his wife had died at the birth of her child, and the daughter she gave him was so frail that he feared lest the mother had bequeathed to her offspring the germs of death. Beauvouloir loved his Gabrielle as all old men love an only child. His science and constant care gave a fictitious life to the fragile creature that he cultivated as a florist would a rare plant. He had shielded her from all eyes in his estate of Forcalier, where she was protected against the troublous times by the general goodwill felt toward a man to whom every one owed some service, and whose scientific skill inspired a species of superstitious terror. By attaching himself to the House of Hérouville, he had further increased the immunities that he enjoyed in the province, and eluded the pursuit of his enemies by his important position with the Governor. But he had taken care, on coming to the château, to leave his blossom safely hidden at Forcalier, an estate more important by reason of its lands than from the house itself, and upon which he hoped to settle his daughter according to his own ideas.

While promising the old Duke a posterity, and demanding approval in advance of his deeds, he had thought suddenly of Gabrielle, the gentle child whose mother had been neglected by the Duke, as the old lord had neglected his son Étienne.

He awaited his master's departure before putting his plan into execution, foreseeing that—if the Duke should know of the thing—the enormous obstacles, upraised against a favorable result, would be insurmountable from the very beginning.

Maître Beauvouloir's house faced the south on the slope of one of those gentle inclines that invest the valleys of Normandy. A thick wood protected it on the north. High

walls and Norman hedges and deep ditches combined to make the retreat impenetrable. The garden sloped by terraces to the stream that watered the valley-lands, and, by its steep banks and clustering undergrowth, made a natural dyke. In this undergrowth wound a secret path, marked out by the bends of the river, and as closely hidden as a forest road by its willows, beeches, and oaks.

From the house to the river bank extended a mass of verdure peculiar to this fertile soil, a pretty slope shaded by a cluster of rare trees whose colors formed a charming background. Here the silver tints of a pine contrasted with the deep green of an elm; there, before a grove of ancient oaks, a slim poplar lifted its tremulous trunk; in the distance, weeping willows drooped their pale leaves between sturdy walnuts. This copse allowed one to descend from the house to the bank, at any hour of the day, without fear of the sun.

A yellow ribbon of sanded walk stretched before the house and was shaded by a wooden arbor, around which clustered climbing plants that, in the month of May, lifted their blossomed heads up to the windows of the first floor.

Without being immense, the garden was given that appearance by the way it was laid out; and its outlooks, skillfully provided for on the knolls, afforded a generous view to the eye in the valley beyond. Thus, following her impulse, Gabrielle could plunge into the solitude of a narrow space where naught could be seen save only the thick grass and, between the tree-tops, the blue sky; or she could soar aloft into the richest perspective of tints with their green contours, from the dazzling foreground to the pure depths of the horizon, where she could lose herself in the blue ocean of air, or in the cloud mountains that rested on its bosom.

Cared for by her grandmother and waited upon by her nurse, Gabrielle never left the modest house except to attend the parish church, the steeple of which could be seen on the hill-top. She was always accompanied by her grandmother, her nurse, and her father's footman. Thus she had reached the age of seventeen in the sweet ignorance that a scarcity of

books permitted to a maiden, in a time when learned women were unusual. Her home had been like a convent, with more freedom, and less required devotion, where she had lived under the eye of a pious old woman, and had been looked after by her father, the only man she had ever known. This profound seclusion, demanded from her birth by the apparent frailty of her constitution, had been carefully maintained by Beauvouloir. And as Gabrielle grew up, the care that was lavished upon her and the effect of a pure atmosphere had assuredly fortified her feeble youth.

Nevertheless, the wise doctor was not to be deceived, upon seeing the mother-of-pearl tints around his daughter's eyes weaken or darken or redden, according to her inward moods. Weakness of body and strength of mind left indicators there, that his long practice led him to recognize. Then, too, Gabrielle's celestial beauty caused him much uneasiness on the score of deeds of violence so common in a time of wars and uprisings. A thousand reasons had advised the father to deepen the shade and increase the seclusion about his child, whose excessive timidity alarmed him. A passion, a seizure, an assault of any kind would have given her the death-blow.

Although his daughter rarely incurred his reproof, a word of blame overwhelmed her; she nursed it in the depths of her heart, where it sank and engendered a brooding sadness; she would retire to weep, and weep protractedly.

With Gabrielle, mental training had demanded no less consideration than physical nurture. The old doctor dared not tell her the tales that other children delighted in; they made too vivid an impression upon her. So this man, whose long practice had taught so many things, was impressed with the need for developing the child's body so that it might withstand the blows inflicted by an overbalancing soul. And since Gabrielle was all his life, his love, his sole heritage, he had never hesitated to procure for her anything that might lead to the desired end. He carefully kept her away from books, pictures, music, and all the creations of art that might serve to quicken her thought. Aided by his mother, he interested Gabrielle

in manual labor. Tapestry, sewing, lace-making, the tending of flowers, household duties, fruit gathering—in short, all the more material occupations of life were given as nourishment to the soul of this charming child. Beauvouloir brought her dainty spinning-wheels, richly-wrought chests, luxurious rugs, pottery from Bernard de Palissy, tables, *prie-dieus,* carved chairs with costly coverings, embroidered linen, and jewels. With a father's instinct, the old man always selected his gifts from among those things ornamented in a peculiar style known as the "Arabesque," which, speaking neither to the soul nor to the sense, addresses itself directly to the spirit by its creations of pure fancy.

And thus—strange circumstance!—the life to which Étienne d'Hérouville had been condemned by a father's hatred, had been imposed upon Gabrielle Beauvouloir by a father's love. In both children, the soul menaced the body; and had it not been for a profound seclusion, that fate had commanded for one and science had advised for the other, both must have succumbed—he to his terrors, she beneath the weight of too ardent an affection. But, alas! instead of being born in a land of moor and heather, in the bosom of an arid waste amid stunted and stony growths, given by all the painters as a background for their Virgins, Gabrielle lived in a grassy and blooming valley. Beauvouloir could not prevent the harmonious arrangement of natural groves, the charming pattern of flower-plots, the grateful yielding of the grassy carpet, the love expressed by the intertwining of the climbing plants. These sentient poems had their own speech, felt rather than understood by Gabrielle, who gave herself up to confused reveries underneath the shade of the trees; and—through the hazy ideas suggested to her by her admiration for the blue sky, and protracted study of the changing landscape under its impress of the seasons, and of the variations in the sea-line where the mists of England give way to the clear sky of France—a far-away light dawned on her soul, an aurora that pierced the shadows wherein her father had bade her dwell.

Beauvouloir had not restrained Gabrielle from the influence of a Divine love; she united to her admiration of nature, the adoration for her Creator. She had followed the first path left free to feminine emotions; she loved God, she loved Christ, the Holy Virgin, and the saints; she loved the Church and all its ceremonies. She was a Catholic after the manner of Saint Theresa, who found in the Messiah an infallible spouse, a continual marriage. But Gabrielle gave herself over to this passion of strenuous souls with a simplicity so touching as to have disarmed the most brutal seducer, by the childish artlessness of her conversation.

Whither would this innocent life lead Gabrielle? How best could be trained a mind as pure as the waters of a tranquil lake that had never reflected other than the blue of the sky? What picture could be made upon that spotless canvas? Around what tree would the snowy bell-flowers blossom? The father never asked himself these questions without an inward shudder.

The worthy old doctor was making his way homeward on his mule as deliberately as though he wished to string out to eternity the road leading from Château d'Hérouville to Ourscamp, the village near the estate of Forcalier. The infinite love he bore his daughter had engendered a hardy project! Only one being in the world could make her happy, and that being was Étienne. Assuredly the angelic son of Jeanne de Saint-Savin and the artless daughter of Gertrude Marana were twin souls. Any other woman than Gabrielle would bring fear and death to the heir presumptive of the House of Hérouville. Similarly, it seemed to Beauvouloir that Gabrielle must inevitably perish at the hand of any man whose sentiments and external appearance lacked the womanly delicacy of Étienne. But, really, the poor doctor had never before dreamed of this match; fate had brought it about and ordained it.

Nevertheless, who would dare—in the time of Louis XIII. —to suggest to the Duc d'Hérouville that he mate his only

son with the daughter of a Norman bone-setter! Still, from this union alone could come the line so imperiously demanded by the old Duke. Nature had destined these two beautiful creatures for each other. Heaven had brought them together by an incredible chain of events, while human ideas and laws had placed between them an impassable gulf.

Although the old doctor believed he could discern the finger of God in this, and in spite, too, of the promise he had obtained unawares from the Duke, he was seized by such apprehensions, as he thought of the violence of the Duke's ungoverned temper, that he turned on his steps when, from the crest of the hill over against Ourscamp, he perceived the smoke ascending from the roof between the trees of his estate. But he was determined in his course by the thought of his relationship, though illegitimate,—a consideration that might have some weight with the Duke.

Once decided, Beauvouloir was willing to risk the hazard. The Duke might die before the marriage. Moreover, he could cite precedents: a peasant girl of Dauphiné, Françoise Mignot by name, had recently espoused the Maréchal de l'Hôpital; the son of Constable Anne de Montmorency had wedded Diane, the daughter of Henry II. by a Piedmontese lady named Philippa Duc.

During this deliberation, while the father's love weighed every probability, calculated the good and evil chances, and essayed to solve the future by an analysis of its elements, Gabrielle was walking in the garden, plucking flowers for a vase made by the famous potter who wrought with his clay what Benvenuto Cellini had made with his metals.

Gabrielle had placed this vase, which bore figures of animals in bas-relief, on a table in the centre of the room, and was filling it with flowers to please her grandmother, and, perhaps also, to give expression to her own thought. The magnificent earthenware vessel, known as Limoges, was at last filled, trimmed, and deposited on the rich cover of the table, and Gabrielle was saying to her grandmother, "Now look!" when Beauvouloir came in.

The girl ran to embrace her father. After the first effusion of tenderness, she wanted him to admire the bouquet. But when he had noticed it, he looked at Gabrielle so searchingly as to cause her to blush.

"It is indeed time," said he to himself, understanding the significance of these flowers, each of which had undoubtedly been studied for form and coloring, and had been placed in the exact place where it could best produce a magical effect in the bouquet.

Gabrielle remained standing, giving no thought to the floral pattern she had begun to embroider. As he regarded his child, a tear started from Beauvouloir's eye, trickled down his cheeks, that were still unaccustomed to this drawn, serious expression, and fell upon his shirt that, following the fashion of the time, was visible under an open doublet, above his trunk hose. He threw aside his felt hat, decorated with an ancient red plume, to pass his hand over his smooth pate. As he gazed anew at his daughter, standing here, in the soft light under the brown joists of a room that was hung with leather, set with ebony furniture, and screened at the tall chimney-place by portières of heavy silk, the wretched father felt the tears welling up and wiped them away. A father who loves his child wishes to keep that child ever youthful; and the man who can see, without deep grief, his daughter passing into the care of another, does not rise to a superior plane, but sinks instead into the basest depths.

"What ails you, my son?" said the aged mother, taking off her spectacles and seeking the reason of the silence, that surprised her, in a man usually so cheerful.

The old doctor pointed at his daughter. The grandam nodded approvingly, as much as to say: "She is a darling!"

Who would not have shared Beauvouloir's emotion on seeing the young girl as she appeared in the dress of the time and under the bright Norman sky. Gabrielle wore her bodice cut pointed in front and square behind, such as the Italian painters have nearly always given their saints and madonnas. This handsome corselet of sky-blue velvet, as dainty as that of

a dragon-fly, clung to her closely, setting off the finely-modeled form that it seemed to compress; it revealed the outlines of the shoulders, back, and waist with a nicety of design that a skilled artist would affect, and it ended about the neck with an opening cut V-shaped and edged with light embroidery of carmelite silk, showing enough to indicate the fine bust, while avoiding the slightest suggestiveness. A gown of carmelite color, which continued the lines begun by the velvet bodice, fell to her feet in narrow, flattened pleats.

So slender was her figure that Gabrielle looked tall. Her small arms hung idly in a way that betokened deep thought. Thus posed, she presented a living model for the guileless masterpieces of statuary, then greatly admired, that appealed by the smoothness of their straight, but not stiff, lines, and by the firmness of a contour that was not devoid of life. No swallow, darting athwart the window-pane at twilight, could present a figure more elegantly cut. Her features were small but not commonplace. Her neck and brow were mantled with fine blue veins that brought out tintings like those of an agate, and revealed the delicacy of a complexion so transparent as to lead one to think that he saw the blood coursing within. This excessive pallor was faintly tinged with rose in the cheeks. Under a little bonnet of blue velvet embroidered with pearls, her hair peeped forth, and ran like two golden rivulets across her temples, falling in ringlets over the shoulders that they did not hide. The warm color of this silken hair heightened the dazzling whiteness of the neck and, by its reflection, gave added charm to the pure outlines of the face. Her eyes were somewhat widely set and seemed oppressed by heavy eyelids, but were in keeping with the grace of form and feature; their pearly-gray depths were bright but not searching, and passionate but veiled in innocence. The line of the nose would have seemed as thin as a knife-blade but for the rose-velvety nostrils whose dilations did not harmonize with the chastity of a dreamy forehead, often wondering, occasionally smiling, and always serenely august. Finally, a pretty ear invited attention by displaying, under the bonnet, between two curls,

a ruby ear-drop that gleamed in sharp contrast to the milky-white throat.

Hers was not the buxom beauty of a Norman woman, nor the Southern beauty where passion lends a certain nobleness, nor the distinctively French beauty as fleeting as its expressions, nor the cold, petulant beauty of the North; it was the deep, seraphic beauty of the Catholic Church, at once yielding and firm, severe and tender.

"Where could be found a prettier duchess?" said Beauvouloir to himself, as he viewed Gabrielle in delight, while she leaned forward slightly and craned her neck to follow the flight of a bird without. She could be compared only to a gazelle that pauses to heed the murmur of a stream where it goes to quench its thirst.

"Come, sit here," said Beauvouloir, slapping his knee, and making a sign to Gabrielle that announced some piece of confidence.

Gabrielle understood and came. She settled herself on his lap with the lightness of a gazelle, and twined her arms about his neck, crumpling his collar.

"Whom did you have in mind as you gathered the flowers? You never made a bouquet so fine before."

"I thought of lots of things," she answered; "as I admired these flowers, that seemed to be made for us, I wondered for whom we ourselves are made—what class of beings look upon us. You are my father; I can tell you of my inward thoughts. You are learned and can explain them all. I feel within me a force that would exert itself; I struggle against something. When the sky is gray, I am half content; I am saddened by the calm. When the day is fair and the flowers emit sweet odors, I sit out there on the beach under the honeysuckle and jasmine, and there arises, as it were, inward waves that dash themselves against my inertness. Thoughts enter and smite my soul and then fly like birds, so swiftly that I cannot catch them.

"Well, when I have made a bouquet where the colors are arranged like a tapestry, where the red borders on the white, or

the green and brown intermingle; when all things abound, and the blossoms nod in the breeze; when there is a medley of perfumes and a tangle of flower-cups, I recognize the state of my own thoughts and am happy. And at church, when the organ sounds and the priest responds—two separate strains that answer each other, the human voice and the music—well, I am content; the harmony strikes an echoing note in my heart; I pray with a delight that fires my blood."

As he listened to his daughter, Beauvouloir watched her sagaciously. His eye seemed dulled by the very force of quickened thought, just as the water of a cascade seems motionless. He raised the fleshly veil hiding the secret spring by which the soul reacts upon the body; he studied the varied symptoms which long experience had revealed in all the patients entrusted to his care, and he compared them with the symptoms present in this frail body, that caused him alarm by its weak bones and its milky-white skin betraying lack of consistency. He tried to rely upon the teachings of science to fathom the future of this angelic child, and he was seized with a vertigo upon finding himself, as it were, on the brink of a precipice. Gabrielle's too vibrant voice, her too graceful form troubled him; and after questioning her he questioned himself.

"You are restless here!" he exclaimed at last, prompted by a final thought in his meditations.

She gently bowed her head.

"Then Heaven shield us!" he said with a sigh. "I will take you to the Château d'Hérouville, where you can take sea-baths that will strengthen you."

"Do you really mean it, father? You are not jesting with Gabrielle? I have such a desire to see the château, the men-at-arms, and monseigneur's captains!"

"Yes, my child. Your nurse and Jean will accompany you."

"Will it be soon?"

"To-morrow," replied the old man, going precipitately into the garden to hide his agitation from his mother and his daughter.

"God is my witness," cried he, "that no ambitious thought has influenced me in this! To save my child and to make poor little Étienne happy—these are my only motives!"

But he thus cross-examined himself because he felt in the depths of his conscience an unquenchable satisfaction at the knowledge that, through the success of his plan, Gabrielle would one day be Duchess d'Hérouville. There is ever the man in the father.

He paced back and forth for a long time, went in to supper, and, throughout the whole evening, regarded his daughter with satisfaction, amid the soft and sober poesy in which he was accustomed to view her.

When, before retiring, the grandmother, the nurse, Gabrielle, and the doctor knelt in family worship, he said to them:

"Pray God that He may bless my enterprise."

The grandmother, who knew of her son's plan, felt her eyes grow moist with her few remaining tears. The inquisitive Gabrielle glowed with happiness. The father shuddered, so great was his fear of some catastrophe.

"After all," said his mother to him, "do not be frightened, Antoine. The Duke will not slay his granddaughter."

"No," he replied, "but he can make her wed some brutal baron who will kill her."

The following morning, Gabrielle, mounted on an ass, followed by her nurse on foot, and her father bestriding his mule, and accompanied by a valet who led the two horses laden with baggage, started on the road to Château d'Hérouville, which the cavalcade reached only at nightfall. In order to keep the journey secret, Beauvouloir had gone by roundabout ways, starting early in the morning, and he had taken along provisions to eat on the road, to avoid showing himself at an inn. Thus he was enabled to reach his destination after dark, without being noticed by the retainers of the castle—that destination being the cottage where the hated son had so long dwelt, and where now awaited Bertrand, the only person whom he had let into his confidence.

The old squire helped the doctor, the nurse, and the valet to unload the horses, carry in the luggage, and establish Beauvouloir's daughter in Étienne's abode. When Bertrand caught sight of Gabrielle he stood aghast.

"Methinks I see madame!" cried he. "She is slender and frail as she was; she has the same pale color and fair hair. The old Duke will love her."

"God grant it!" said Beauvouloir. "But will he acknowledge that his blood has crossed with mine?"

"He can scarcely gainsay it," said Bertrand. "Often have I awaited him at the door of *Belle Romaine,* who lived then on Rue Culture-Sainte-Catherine. The Cardinal de Lorraine was compelled to leave her to monseigneur through very shame at having been maltreated on leaving her door. Monseigneur, who in those days trod the sturdy heel of twenty years, must recollect that ambush well. He was even then a bold fellow; and I may as well confess now that he started the assault."

"He thinks very little of that now," said Beauvouloir; "he knows that my wife is dead, but he is hardly aware of the fact that I have a daughter."

"Two old foxes like ourselves can steer the boat into a good harbor," said Bertrand. "But, after all, if the Duke is angry and takes it out on our carcasses, they have outlived their usefulness."

Before his departure, the Duke had forbidden all the retainers, under the severest penalties, to go down on the beach, where Étienne had passed thus much of his life, unless the Duc de Nivron desired them to accompany him. This order, suggested by Beauvouloir, who had shown the need of allowing Étienne to adhere to his old habits, guaranteed to Gabrielle and her nurse the absolute seclusion of this spot, whence the doctor now commanded them never to leave without his permission.

Étienne had remained, during these two days, in the seigneurial chamber, given over to the charm of his tender

memories. That bed had been his mother's. Here she had undergone that dreadful scene at his birth, when Beauvouloir had saved two lives. To this furniture she had confided her thoughts; it had served her. Her eyes had often wandered over this wainscoting. And this window—how often had she come to it to call or to beckon to the poor, disowned child, now the sovereign lord of the castle!

As he lingered alone in this room, whither he had come the last time, so furtively carried by Beauvouloir, to give a last kiss to his dying mother, he brought her to life again: he spoke to her, he listened to her voice; he drank deeply of that spring that never runs dry, and from which well up so many songs with the refrain: *Super flumina Babylonis.*

On the morning of his return, Beauvouloir came to see his young master, and scolded him mildly for staying shut up in his room, calling his attention to the fact that it would not do to give up his life in the open air for that of a prisoner.

"This room is very wide," replied Étienne, "for herein abides my mother's soul."

However, the doctor persuaded Étienne, by the gentle influence of affection, to walk out every day, either to the seashore or into the country roundabout that was so unknown to him. But Étienne lingered, a prey to his memories, all day at the window, occupied in contemplating the sea, which presented aspects so multiform that he believed it had never seemed so beautiful. He varied his meditations by readings from Petrarch, one of his favorite authors, whose poetry went straight to his heart by the constancy and singleness of its love. Étienne was not given to many affections; he could love only one way and but once. Though that love was to be lasting—as all such are—it was also to be tranquil in its expression, gentle and pure as the Italian poet's sonnets.

At sunset, the child of solitude began to sing with that marvelous voice which had fallen like a promise upon even the dullest ears for melody—those of his father. He gave utterance to his sadness by improvising upon a single strain, many times repeated like the song of a nightingale. This theme,

attributed to the late King Henry IV., is not the *"Air de Gabrielle,"* but one much superior in composition, in melody, and in its expression of tenderness. Admirers of the Old School will recognize it by the words, which are those written by the great King; the music was doubtless taken from the refrains that had lulled his infancy in the mountains of Béarn:—

Viens, Aurore,
Je t' implore,
Je suis gai quand je te voi;
La bergère
Qui m'est chère
Est vermeille comme toi;
De rosée
Arrosée,
La rose a moins de fraicheur;
Une hermine
Est moins fine,
Le lis a moins de blancheur.

After thus innocently revealing his heart's thought in song, Étienne gazed at the sea and exclaimed:

"This is my betrothed, my only love!"

Then he sang that other passage of the ditty:

Elle est blonde,
Sans seconde!

repeating it as though expressing the poetic solicitation that arises in a young man's breast, who dares to speak it when he is alone. It was full of dreams—was this eddying song, broken, resumed, interrupted, begun again, then lost in one last modulation whose tones gradually died away like the vibrations of a bell.

At this moment a voice that he was ready to ascribe to some siren emerged from the sea, a woman's voice, repeated the air that he had just finished, but with all the hesitancy of one in whom the spirit of music had been awakened for the first

time; he recognized the stammering speech of a soul in which the poetry of sound was but now being born.

Étienne, to whom a long study of his own voice had taught the language of sound, wherein the soul finds as many ways to express its thought as it does in speech, could easily fathom all the timid wonderment betrayed in this attempt. With what religious and subtile admiration had he not been followed!

The quietude of evening allowed him to hear the slightest sound, and he trembled at the rustling of a woman's dress. He was surprised to find within himself—wont to be frightened within an inch of his life at unusual things—a feeling of balm like that aroused in bygone days by the coming of his mother.

"Come, Gabrielle, child!" called Beauvouloir. "You know I forbade you to stay out on the beach after sundown. Come in, my daughter!"

"Gabrielle!" said Étienne to himself; "a pretty name!"

Not long thereafter, Beauvouloir appeared and aroused his master out of one of those meditations that resemble dreams.

It was night, and the moon was rising.

"Monseigneur," said the physician, "you have not gone out yet; that is not wise."

"May *I*, then, stay out on the beach after sundown?"

The veiled meaning of Étienne's query, betraying the awakening of desire, made the old man smile.

"You have a daughter, Beauvouloir?"

"Yes, monseigneur, the child of my old age, my heart's treasure. Monseigneur le Duc, your illustrious father, has cautioned me so strongly to watch over your precious days, that I could no longer visit her at Forcalier, where she was. So, to my great regret, I have had to remove her from there; and, to shield her from prying gaze, I have placed her in the house where your lordship formerly lodged. She is so delicate that I am fearful of everything for her, even too sudden an emotion. Indeed, I have taught her nothing, for it would have been her death."

"Does she know nothing at all?" said Étienne, in surprise.

"She has all the accomplishments of a good housewife, but she has lived as a plant lives. Ignorance, monseigneur, is as holy a thing as knowledge; knowledge and ignorance are two distinct conditions of life. Both envelop the spirit as in a shroud. Knowledge made you live; ignorance keeps my daughter alive. The pearls most safely hidden escape the diver and exist joyfully. I can compare my Gabrielle to a pearl: her complexion has its tinting, her soul its purity; and, until now, my estate at Forcalier has served her for a shell."

"Come with me," said Étienne, wrapping his cloak about him. "I would like to stroll along the seashore; the evening is mild."

Beauvouloir and his young master walked in silence to the place where a ray of light, stealing out through the shutters of the fisher's cottage, shot a glint of gold upon the water.

"I can hardly express the sensations aroused in me at sight of a gleam of light upon the sea," said Étienne. "I have often watched the windows of that chamber"—pointing up to his mother's room—"until the light was extinguished."

"Although Gabrielle is very delicate," replied Beauvouloir, cheerily, "she can be allowed to walk with us. The warm night air has no mists in it. I will go seek her. But be careful, monseigneur."

Étienne was too bashful to propose going with Beauvouloir to the cottage. Indeed, he was in that state of lassitude, into which one is plunged by the affluence of ideas and sensations engendered by the dawn of passion. More unrestrained, when he found himself alone, he turned toward the moonlit sea and cried:

"The Ocean, then, has passed into my soul!"

Just then the sight of a charming, living statuette, that neared him, silvered by the enfolding moonbeams, caused Étienne's heart to beat more violently, but without pain.

"My child," said Beauvouloir, "this is monseigneur."

At this moment Étienne longed for his father's colossal frame; he would gladly have appeared strong instead of stunted. Every vanity common to love and to man entered

his heart at once like a dart. He stood in silent regret, measuring, for the first time, the extent of his imperfections. Embarrassed by the young girl's courtesy, he bowed awkwardly and remained by Beauvouloir's side, making all his remarks to him as they promenaded along the beach.

But at last, emboldened by the shy, respectful mien of Gabrielle, he addressed a sentence to her. The circumstance of the song was a chance happening. The doctor had arranged nothing; he had felt that in two beings, whose hearts had been kept spotless by solitude, love would be awakened in its pristine simplicity. Gabrielle's repetition of the song was, therefore, a ready-made topic for conversation.

During this promenade, Étienne felt within himself that corporeal lightness experienced by all men at the moment when a first love transports the very elements of their nature into another being. He offered to teach Gabrielle to sing. The poor boy was so happy at being able to appear invested with some sort of superiority in this girl's eyes, that he trembled with delight when she accepted.

The moon shone full upon Gabrielle, at this moment, and Étienne could see the points of vague resemblance between her and his mother. Like Jeanne de Saint-Savin, the daughter of Beauvouloir was slender and delicate. In the girl, as in the Duchess, suffering and sadness had wrought a mysterious charm. Gabrielle had the nobility peculiar to souls that remain unaffected by the world, and that are beautiful because they are wholly natural. But there was also in her the blood of *la Belle Romaine,* revived after two generations, giving to this child the passion of a courtesan in an unsullied soul; hence came an exaltation that brightened her eye, sanctified her brow, made her appear to exhale a light, and communicated a sparkle of flame to her every motion.

Beauvouloir shuddered when he remarked this phenomenon, spoken of now as the phosphorescence of the thought, but considered by him an omen of death.

Étienne happened to see the young girl craning her neck like a timid bird that peeps forth from its nest. Hidden by

her father, Gabrielle was for studying Étienne at her ease, and this detected glance expressed as much wonder as delight, as much interest as naïve boldness. In her eyes Étienne was not feeble, but delicate; she found him so like herself that she saw nothing to fear in this liege lord. Étienne's hue of suffering, his beautiful hands, his patient smile, his hair parted and falling in curls upon his lace ruff, his noble brow furrowed with premature wrinkles—this contrast of comfort and wretchedness, power and weakness, pleased her; for did it not appeal to the instinct of motherly protection which lies in the germ of love? Did it not stimulate the need actuating every woman to seek something out of the ordinary in the being she would love?

In both of these creatures arose new thoughts and novel emotions with a force and an abundance that caused their souls to expand. They stood silent and wondering; for the expression of sentiment is least demonstrative where it is most profound. All lasting love begins in dreamy meditation. Mayhap it was well enough that these two should come together for the first time under the gentle light of the moon, so that they might not be dazzled suddenly by the glare of love. It was well, too, that they should meet here at the edge of the sea, which revealed to them an image of the vastness of their passion.

They parted full of each other, but each fearing that the other had not been pleased.

From his window Étienne looked down at the light in Gabrielle's abode. And in this hour of hope mingled with fear, the youthful poet found a new significance in the sonnets of Petrarch. He had met with a Laura—a fair, entrancing being, pure and glowing like a sunbeam, intelligent as an angel, frail as a woman. His twenty years of study came in good stead; he understood, now, the mystic relation of every kind of beauty; he saw how much there was of woman in the poems he so loved; in fact, he had been in love unconsciously for so long that his entire past life was confused with the emotions of that rapturous night. Gabrielle's resemblance to

his mother seemed to him to have been divinely ordained. His love was not traitorous to his grief; this love was but a continuance of motherhood. In the night, he thought of the girl resting there in the cottage, with the same emotion that had been aroused in his mother when he was sheltered there. And this fresh resemblance bound still more closely the present with the past. In a haze of memory arose the sad face of Jeanne de Saint-Savin. He beheld her faint smile, he heeded her gentle words, he bowed his head and wept.

The light in the cottage was extinguished. Étienne sang the ballad of Henry IV. with a new expression. In the distance, Gabrielle sought to answer. The young girl was starting forth on her first journey in the enchanted land of ecstatic love. The response filled Étienne's heart with joy. His blood surged with a strength he had never before felt; love was making him vigorous. Only feeble creatures can understand the pleasure of such a regeneration. The wretched, the suffering, the maltreated have joys ineffable at times; so little makes a universe for them. And Étienne was bound by a thousand ties to the people of the City of Grief. His recent advancement in rank caused him nothing but terror, though love shed upon him the creative balm of strength; he was in love with love.

The next morning Étienne rose early to hasten to his former dwelling, where Gabrielle, excited by curiosity and urged on by an eagerness she would not confess to herself, had already combed her tresses and put on her graceful attire. Both were filled with desire for another glimpse, but feared the result of the next meeting. On his part, you may be certain that he had chosen his richest laces, his finest embroidered cloak, his violet velvet trunk-hose; in a word, he had donned the beautiful costume that calls to mind the pallid figure of Louis XIII.—one who was as much down-trodden in the midst of luxury as Étienne had been hitherto. The garb was not the only point of resemblance between the master and the subject. In Étienne, as in Louis XIII., a thousand emotions were contrasted: chastiny, sadness, undefined but genuine suffering, a

chivalrous timidity, a fear of not being able to express a sentiment in its purity, a dread of being led too quickly into the happiness that some great souls wish to defer, an oppressive weight of power, and, finally, that tendency toward obedience, found in persons who are unmindful of their interests, but full of love for that impulse, called by some sanctified genius the "Astral."

Though untutored in the ways of the world, Gabrielle had realized that the daughter of a bone-setter, the lowly inmate of Forcalier, was too far removed from the station of Monseigneur Étienne, Duc de Nivron, heir of the House of Hérouville, for them to be on equal footing; she had not gone far enough to know the elevating power of love. The artless creature had not seen in this an opportunity for attaining a position in life that other girls would have ogled after; she saw nothing but the obstacles. Loving already, without knowing that it was love, she beheld her happiness far removed, and longed to grasp it, as a child clutches after the golden grapes high overhead. For a maiden who was influenced by the sight of a flower, and whose love was aroused by the chants of the liturgy, how gently strong must have been the emotions awakened on the preceding evening at sight of that lordly weakness that resembled so much her own. But Étienne had assumed a larger aspect during the night; she had made him her hope, her strength; she had placed him so high that she despaired of ever reaching him.

"Will you allow me to come sometimes to visit you, in your own domain?" asked the Duke, looking down.

Upon seeing Étienne so beseeching, so humble—for on his part he had deified the daughter of Beauvouloir—Gabrielle was embarrassed at the sceptre that was extended toward her; still, she was deeply touched and flattered by this submission. Women alone know how winning is the respect shown them by one in authority. But, fearing lest she was being beguiled, and actuated by the curiosity of her good Mother Eve, she wished to make sure.

"Did you not promise yesterday to teach me music?" she

answered, devoutly hoping that the music would be excuse enough to keep him near her.

If the poor child had but known Étienne's life-story, she would have been more guarded in her doubts. Speech was for him a direct utterance of the soul; and her words cut him deeply. He had come with a full heart, distrustful of the slightest shadow, and now he met with a doubt. His joy was extinguished, he was driven back once again into his desert, and he found no longer the flowers that had adorned it.

Enlightened by a presentiment of grief which marks the angels charged with soothing it, and which undoubtedly is the spirit of Charity, Gabrielle at once divined the pain she had caused. She was stricken with such remorse as to long for divine power to unveil her heart to Étienne, for she knew full well the cruel pain caused by a reproach or severe look. She innocently allowed him to see the clouds that, in turn, had arisen in her own soul, and that constituted the golden glory of her passion's dawn. A tear from Gabrielle changed Étienne's grief to joy, and he would then have called himself a tyrant. Well was it for them that, thus at the outset, they could know the tenor of their hearts, since it enabled them to avoid a thousand misunderstandings that would have slain them.

All at once, Étienne, eager to entrench himself in some occupation, led Gabrielle to a table before the little window, where he had suffered so many pangs, and where henceforth he was to admire a blossom fairer far than all the flowers he had yet studied. Then he opened a book over which they bent their heads, their locks intertwining.

They formed a touching picture, did these two beings so strong in spirit, so weak in body, but embellished by all the charm of suffering. Gabrielle knew naught of coquetry; a glance was given as soon as asked, and the soft light of their mutual gaze was ended only by an impulse of modesty. She was glad to tell Étienne how much pleasure his song had given her. She forgot the significance of the words when he

explained the position and value of the notes. She listened, but left the melody to the instrument, the idea to the form. It was an artless flattery, the first that comes to true love.

Gabrielle thought Étienne handsome. She wished to caress the velvet cloak, the lace collar. As for Étienne, he became a new being, under the reviving gaze of those deep-set eyes. They infused a life elixir that sparkled in his eyes, glowed upon his forehead, quivered in his whole body. But the renewal of his faculties caused him no suffering; on the contrary, they were strengthened. Happiness was the nourishment of this new life.

As they were left to themselves, they remained together not only on this day but on every other; for they belonged to each other from the first, giving each to each the sceptre, and playing with life as children play. Sitting contented on the gilded sands, they spoke of their past—to one so sad but full of dreams, to the other so dreamy but full of painful delight.

"I have not had a mother's care," said Gabrielle, "but my father has had the goodness of God."

"I have not had a father's love," replied the hated son, "but my mother has been Heaven itself."

Étienne recounted his youth, his love for his mother, his taste for flowers. Gabrielle chimed in on the last; but, when questioned, she blushed and evaded answering. Then, when a cloud passed over the brow that Death seemed ever to brush with his pinions, and brooded on a soul that revealed Étienne's slightest emotions, she replied:

"I, too, have always loved flowers."

Was not this a declaration such as maidens are wont to make, believing themselves identified with their lovers, even in the past, by a community of tastes? Love is always trying to appear old—following a whim of children.

Étienne brought her some flowers the next day, giving orders to obtain the rarest, such as his mother once sought out for him. In truth it is hard to realize the deep-rooted sentiment that, in this solitary being, stretched back to the traditions of a motherhood, and lavished upon a woman all

the tender care by which his mother had charmed his life! For him what grandeur there was in the trifles that conjoined the one love with the other!

Flowers and music became the language of their love. Gabrielle replied to his flowers with bouquets of her own arranging—nosegays similar to the one that had apprised the old doctor of his untutored child's surpassing knowledge. The lovers' inexperience in worldly affairs formed a dark background for the smallest features of their entirely spiritual intimacy, which stood out with exquisite grace like the pure, red outlines of figures on an Etruscan vase. The slightest word carried with it a flood of ideas, for it was the result of deep thought. Incapable of any boldness, every beginning was also an end. Although unrestrained in conduct, they were really prisoners to an innocence that would have become despair if either one had understood the purport of their vague longing. They were poets and poetry at the same time. Music, the most sensuous of arts for loving souls, was the interpreter of their thought; and their pleasure was derived from singing the same theme, and pouring out their passion in a delightful flood of sound wherein their hearts could vibrate in uninterrupted unison.

Many affections grow by opposition; there are quarrels and renewals, a vulgar contest of mind and matter. But the first flight of true love carries it far above these strugglings; two natures can no longer be distinguished between, when they have the same essence. Like genius in its highest expression, love can hold in the most vivid light; it can sustain it, and thrive in it, and there is no need of shadow to enhance its charm.

Gabrielle, because she was a woman, and Étienne, because he had suffered much and thought much, quickly mounted beyond the realm of vulgar passion. Like all feeble natures, they became readily imbued with faith, the heavenly purple glow which increases strength while adding to the stature of the soul. For them the sun was ever at high noon. Soon they had that divine belief in each other that brooks neither

jealousy nor torment of doubt. Their self-sacrifice was ever ready, their admiration unending. Under such conditions, love knew no grief. Placed on equal footing by their feebleness—which had been made strength by their union—though the young nobleman had some superior knowledge and conventional polish, it was overbalanced by the beauty of the doctor's daughter, her lofty nature, and her innate refinement.

Thus was it that suddenly these two white doves flew with single wing into the smiling sky. Étienne loved, he was loved; the present was serene, the future cloudless. He was master, the castle was his own, the sea belonged to them both. No disturbant element came to mar the harmony of their dual song. The virgin purity of their minds and hearts made the world seem large to them; their thoughts flowed without effort. Desire, whose satisfaction blights so many beings—Desire, the fell weakness of terrestrial love, had as yet passed them by. Like twin Zephyrs perched upon the same willow-branch, they were still content to behold their likenesses in the mirror of a limpid pool. Immensity sufficed them. They admired the ocean with never a thought of gliding over it in a white-sailed bark, with rose-wreathed rigging, that is steered by Hope.

There comes in love a moment when it is all-sufficient, when it is happy in mere existence. In the spring when everything is in bloom, the lover will sometimes hide from his sweetheart in order to gain added delight when next he sees her. But Étienne and Gabrielle plunged together into the joy of that childlike hour. They were, at times, as two sisters in the charm of their confiding—at times as two brothers in the boldness of their inquiry. Ordinarily love demands a slave and a divinity, but they realized Plato's delightful dream, where there is a single supreme being. They took turns in holding sway.

Caresses came slowly, one by one, but harmless as the gambols, so frolicsome, so lively, so coquettish, of young animals just beginning to live. The sentiment, that had

caused them to give forth their souls in impassioned song, led them to love through the myriad manifestations of the same happiness. Their joy caused them neither delirium nor sleeplessness. It was the infancy of pleasure growing up unconsciously to the bright red blossoms that crown its stem. They would give themselves each to each with no suspicion of danger; they yielded themselves in a word, a look, a kiss, a long pressure of clasped hands. They ingeniously boasted of their beauty, and in these secret idyls they expended a wealth of language, devising the sweetest exaggerations and the most emphatic diminutives ever invented by Tibullus' ancient Muse and echoed by Italian poetry. Within their hearts and upon their lips was the constant beat as of surf upon the shore—all so alike, all so unlike. Blissful, unending fidelity!

If one counts days, this period lasted for five months; if one counts the innumerable sensations, the thoughts, the dreams, the looks, the unfolded flowers, the realized hopes, the unending joys, the unbound tresses so assiduously combed and then refastened with flowers, the talks interrupted, recommenced, and broken off, the careless laughter, the feet laved by the sea, the childish quests for shells among the rocks, the kisses, the surprises, the embraces,—it may be called a lifetime, and death will justify the term.

It is the fate of some lives always to be overcast, and completed under gray skies. But, suppose there came a bright day when the radiant sky illumined a clear atmosphere, and you will have the May-day of their tenderness, when Étienne hung all his past griefs upon Gabrielle's heart, and the young girl united her future with that of her lord.

Étienne had experienced but one grief in his life, the death of his mother; he was destined to have but one love, Gabrielle.

The vulgar rivalry of an ambitious man broke in upon this honeyed existence.

The Duc d'Hérouville, an old warrior inured to strategy,

roughly politic but no less skillful, had felt within himself a vague note of distrust after having given the promise demanded by the doctor. The Baron d'Artagnon, lieutenant of his company of ordnance, enjoyed all his confidence in matters of policy.

The Baron was a man after the Duke's own heart,—a sort of butcher, of tall and burly figure and cold, stern, virile face; brave in the King's service, but rude in manner; of an iron will in execution, but easy to command—in a word, an ambitious nobleman with the probity of a soldier and the trickery of a politician. His hand matched his frame, the large, hairy hand of a condottiere. He had an abrupt way with him, and his speech was brief and concise.

Now the Governor had commanded the lieutenant to watch the doctor in his care of the new heir presumptive. Despite the secrecy that surrounded Gabrielle, it was difficult to deceive the lieutenant of a company of ordnance. He heard the two voices blending in song; he saw the light in the cottage by the sea. He divined that all Étienne's care in dress, the flowers he requested, and the orders he gave must concern a woman. Then he surprised Gabrielle's nurse on her way to Forcalier, whence she returned bringing some linen, a sewing-frame, or other girlish implement.

The soldier made up his mind to see the bone-setter's daughter; he saw her; he fell in love with her. Beauvouloir was rich. The Duke would be furious with the goodman's boldness. Upon these events, the Baron d'Artagnon builded the edifice of his fortune. Upon learning that his son was in love, the Duke would want to procure for him a daughter of a great family, the heiress of some estate. And in order to cure Étienne of his passion, it would be necessary only to make Gabrielle faithless by giving her in marriage to a noble whose lands were in pawn at some money-lender's. The Baron was that man.

These premises would have been excellent with persons ordinarily met in the world, but they were of no avail with Étienne and Gabrielle. But Chance had come already to the Baron's aid.

During his stay at Paris, the Duke had avenged Maximilien's death by killing the adversary of his son. He had also heard of an unhoped-for alliance for Étienne with the heiress to the estate of a branch of the Grandlieus, a haughty, imperious creature, who, nevertheless, was won by the hope of bearing one day the title of Duchesse d'Hérouville. So the Duke hoped to wed his son to Mademoiselle de Grandlieu. And when he learned that Étienne was in love with the daughter of a miserable bone-setter, his hope became determination. To him this determination left nothing more to be said.

Do not imagine for a moment that a man of such brutality could understand the cruelty of love! He had let Étienne's mother die by his side without realizing a single one of her sighs. Never, perhaps, in his life had he been seized with an anger more raging than that which overcame him when the last message from the Baron apprised him of the rapid progress of Beauvouloir's designs—ascribed by the captain to the most audacious ambition. The Duke ordered his carriages forthwith, and went from Paris to Rouen, taking with him to his château the Comtesse de Grandlieu, her sister the Marquise de Noirmoutier, and Mademoiselle de Grandlieu, under the pretext of showing them the Province of Normandy.

For several days before his arrival, though no one knew how the rumor had gotten abroad, everybody from Hérouville to Rouen talked only of the young Duc de Nivron's passion for Gabrielle Beauvouloir, the daughter of the well-known bone-setter. The citizens of Rouen spoke of it to the old Duke, in the very midst of a feast they had tendered him, for the guests were only too glad of a chance to pique the despot of Normandy. This circumstance roused the Governor's ire to the boiling point. He sent word to the Baron to keep his coming secret, and gave him orders to guard against what he considered a disaster.

Meanwhile Étienne and Gabrielle had unwound all the thread from their ball in the labyrinth of love, and both of

them, little concerned with leaving, wished to live there always. One day they were sitting by the window where so many things had happened. The hours, filled at first with gentle prattling, had ended in silent meditation. They had begun to feel within them the indefinite longing for complete possession. They confided their confused emotions to each other, reflecting the sweet image of their pure souls.

Ever and anon, during these still tranquil moments, Étienne's eyes would fill with tears, as he held Gabrielle's hand pressed to his lips. Like his mother, but just now happier than she had been, the hated son looked out on the sea, gleaming like gold upon the strand, black in the horizon, and cut here and there by blades of silver, announcing the approach of a storm. Gabrielle, following her lover's eyes, contemplated the scene and was silent. A single glance—one of those by which souls seek each other's aid—sufficed to communicate their thoughts. The utmost self-abandonment would have been no sacrifice to Gabrielle, nor a demand from Étienne. Both loved with that passion so divinely sincere throughout all eternity, that they knew not the meaning of sacrifice, and feared neither deception nor delay. But then they were yet in absolute ignorance of the ends of the desire that disturbed their souls.

When the dim shades of twilight had cast their veil over the sea, and the silence was unbroken, save by the breathing of the ebb and flow upon the beach, Étienne arose. Gabrielle did likewise, with a vague fear, for he had loosed her hand. He took her in his arms and folded her to his heart with a tender pressure. And, understanding his emotion, she nestled against him with weight enough to make him feel that she was indeed his, but not enough to weary him. He allowed his overburdened head to rest upon her shoulder, his lips touched her throbbing bosom, his locks fell over her fair shoulders and dallied with her throat. The artlessly passionate child inclined her head to make a better resting place for Étienne, and twined her arm about his neck to support herself. And thus they stood in silence until night had fallen.

The crickets chirped in the crannies, and the two lovers listened to the melody as though they would concentrate all their senses into one. They might then have been compared to an angel who, with one foot lingering on earth, waits but the time appointed to reascend to heaven. They were working out in themselves that beauteous dream of Plato's mystic genius, and of all who seek a meaning in humanity; they were one soul. They were that mysterious pearl destined to adorn the brow of some unknown star, our undivided hope.

"Will you take me home?" said Gabrielle, the first to intrude upon this delightful calm.

"Why should we go?" replied Étienne.

"We should be together always," she said.

"Then stay."

"Yes."

The heavy step of old Beauvouloir was heard in the neighboring apartment. The doctor found the children standing apart, though he had seen them embracing at the window. The purest love seeks still its mystery.

"This is not well, my child," said he to Gabrielle; "what, stay here so late without a light?"

"Why not?" said she. "You are well aware that we love one another, and he is lord of the castle."

"My children," replied Beauvouloir, "if you love each other, your happiness demands that you wed and live together. But your marriage is subject to the will of Monseigneur le Duc——"

"My father promised to grant all my desires," cried Étienne, quickly interrupting Beauvouloir.

"Then write him, monseigneur," replied the physician, "tell him of your wish, and give me your letter to send with one I am writing. Bertrand himself will set out immediately to carry the messages to the Duke. I have just been advised that he is at Rouen. He brings the heiress of the house of Grandlieu, and I cannot think that she is intended for himself. If I heeded my presentiments, I should take Gabrielle away this very night."

"Separate us!" cried Étienne, giving way to grief and leaning on the girl.

"Father!"

"Gabrielle," said the doctor, giving her a flask from the table, and which she applied to Étienne's nostrils, "Gabrielle, my learning has told me that nature destined you two for each other. But I had intended to prepare Monseigneur le Duc for a marriage that will run counter to all his ideas, and the devil has gotten in ahead of us. *He* is the Duc de Nivron," continued he to Gabrielle, "while *you* are only the daughter of a lowly doctor."

"My father has sworn never to oppose me in anything," said Étienne, calmly.

"He took oath also to me to consent to whatever I might do in seeking a mate for you," rejoined the doctor, "but if he does not keep his word?"

Étienne sank down as though stunned.

"The sea was lowering this evening," said he, after a moment's silence.

"If you but knew how to ride, monseigneur," said the doctor, "I would tell you to fly with Gabrielle this very night. I understand you both so well that I know that any other alliance for either would mean death. The Duke would, of course, throw me into a dungeon and leave me there for the rest of my life, when he learned of this flight; however, I would die joyfully, if my death would assure your happiness. But, alas! to mount a horse would be to imperil your life as well as Gabrielle's. We must brook here the Governor's ire."

"Here!" repeated the hapless Étienne.

"We have been betrayed by some one in the castle, who has provoked your father's wrath," replied Beauvouloir.

"Come, let us cast ourselves together into the sea," said Étienne, leaning over to whisper to Gabrielle, as she knelt by her lover's side.

She bowed her head and smiled. Beauvouloir understood their plan.

"Monseigneur," said he, "your learning as well as your

native wit has made you eloquent; love should make you irresistible. Declare your passion to Monseigneur le Duc, and you will confirm my letter, which is conclusive enough. All is not lost, I feel. I love my child as much as you love her, and mean to protect her."

Étienne shook his head.

"The sea was very threatening this evening," he said.

"It was like a sheet of gold at our feet," replied Gabrielle, musically.

Étienne ordered lights and sat himself down at a table to write to his father. Beside his chair knelt Gabrielle, silently looking at the writing without knowing its content; she read it all on Étienne's brow. On the other side sat Beauvouloir, whose erstwhile cheery face was deeply sad—sad as this room wherein Étienne's mother had breathed her last. An inward voice cried to the doctor:

"He will share his mother's fate!"

The letter ended, Étienne handed it to the old man, who lost no time in giving it to Bertrand. The squire's steed was ready saddled. He took the missive and rode away forthwith.

Four leagues away from Hérouville he encountered the Duke.

When the two children were alone, Gabrielle said: "Take me as far as the door of the court."

Together they passed through the cardinal's library and descended by the tower stairway to the door whose key had been given Gabrielle by Étienne. Bewildered by his presentiment of misfortune, the poor child left in the tower the torch that served to light his beloved home, so he took her back without it. A few paces away from the little garden that made a flower-court for the humble dwelling, the lovers paused. Emboldened by the vague dread that agitated them, they gave, here in the shadow and silence, the first kiss where the spirit and soul unite to create a prophetic pleasure. Étienne realized the twofold expression of love. Gabrielle

fled for fear of being led by Pleasure—whither? She did not know.

At the moment when the Duc de Nivron was ascending the stairway, after having closed the door to the tower, a terrified cry from Gabrielle rang in his ear with the vividness of a light flashed in his face. Étienne hastened down the steps, across the beach and to the cottage, where he saw a light.

Upon going into the little garden, by the light of the torch by her nurse's spinning-wheel, Gabrielle had perceived a man on the chair, in the place of that good woman. At the sound of her approach, this man had advanced towards her and had frightened her. Indeed, the looks of Baron d'Artagnon were enough to cause her terror.

"You are the daughter of Beauvouloir, physician to Monseigneur?" said the lieutenant, when Gabrielle had recovered somewhat from her fright.

"Yes, seigneur."

"I have something of the highest importance to confide to you. I am Baron d'Artagnon, lieutenant of the company of ordnance at the service of Monseigneur le Duc d'Hérouville."

Under the circumstances in which the lovers were placed, Gabrielle was struck by his words and the confident tone in which they were uttered.

"Your nurse is in there; she can hear us. Come!" said the Baron.

He went out and Gabrielle followed him. They walked on the beach immediately behind the house.

"Fear nothing," said the Baron.

The words would have created consternation in a person less ignorant. But a young, innocent girl who is in love thinks no evil.

"My dear child," said the Baron, trying to give his voice a softened tone, "both you and your father are on the edge of a gulf into which you will fall to-morrow. I could not see the danger without warning you of it. Monseigneur is furious with your father and you; he suspects you of having

beguiled his son, whom he would rather see dead than married to you. So much for his son. As to your father, Monseigneur has taken the following resolution: Nine years ago your father was implicated in a criminal lawsuit. He was accused of concealing a child of noble family at the moment of its birth, which he attended. Monseigneur, knowing of your father's innocence, stood his security. Now, however, he is going to have him seized and delivered over to justice, demanding that they proceed against him. Your father will be broken on the wheel; but, on account of the services he has rendered his master, perhaps he may only be hanged. I do not know what Monseigneur has decided to do in your case; but I do know that you can save Monseigneur de Nivron from his father's anger, save Beauvouloir from the dreadful torture that awaits him, and save yourself."

"How?" said Gabrielle.

"Go and cast yourself at Monseigneur's feet. Confess to him that his son loved you against your will; and say that you do not love him. In proof of this, offer to marry the man whom he may be pleased to choose for your husband. He is generous, and will endow you handsomely."

"I can do all except renounce my love."

"But if need were to save your father, yourself, and Monseigneur de Nivron?"

"Étienne would die—and I as well!"

"Monseigneur de Nivron would mourn your loss, but he will live for the honor of the House. You must resign yourself to be only the wife of a baron, instead of being a duchess; and your father will live," replied the man, positively.

Just then Étienne reached the house. He did not see Gabrielle, and uttered a piercing cry.

"There he is!" exclaimed the girl; "let me go to reassure him."

"I shall come for your answer to-morrow morning," said the Baron.

"I shall consult my father," she replied.

"You will see him no more; I have just received the order

to arrest him and convey him to Rouen in chains and under guard."

And he left Gabrielle terror-stricken.

The young girl darted into the house and discovered Étienne stunned by the silence, which was the nurse's only reply to his question:

"Where is she?"

"Here I am!" cried Gabrielle; but her voice was frozen, her color had vanished, and her steps were lagging.

"Where have you been?" said he; "you cried out."

"Yes, I struck myself against——"

"No, dearest," interrupted Étienne, "I distinguished a man's step."

"Étienne, we have certainly offended God. Get down on your knees and pray. Afterwards I will tell you all."

Étienne and Gabrielle knelt together on the *prie-dieu,* while the nurse told her beads.

"O, God!" said the young girl in a transport of devotion that made her transcend the confines of earth, "if we have not broken any of Thy holy commandments; if we have offended neither the Church nor the King—we who are but one, and in whom love sheds as pure a ray as that Thou hast placed in a pearl of the sea—grant that we may never be parted in this world or in the world to come!"

"Dear mother," added Étienne, "thou who art in heaven, beseech the Holy Virgin, if we are not to live happy here, Gabrielle and I, that we may at least meet a painless death together. Call us, and we will go to thee!"

Then after reciting their evening prayers, Gabrielle told of her interview with the Baron d'Artagnon.

"Gabrielle," said the young man, gaining courage in the despair of love, "I will oppose my father."

He kissed her brow—not her lips—then he hastened back to the château, resolved to stand out against the terrible man who was crushing out his whole life. He was not aware that Gabrielle's house was beset by soldiers the moment he had quitted it.

The following morning Étienne was overcome by grief when, on going to see Gabrielle, he found her a prisoner. But Gabrielle sent her nurse to say to him that she would die sooner than betray him; and, moreover, that she knew of a way to elude the guards, and would take refuge in the cardinal's library where no one might suspect her whereabouts—but that she did not know just when she could carry out her plan. So Étienne remained in that room where his heart beat itself out in strained expectation.

At three o'clock the equipages of the Duke and his train entered the château, where his guests were to sup. Indeed, at nightfall, came Madame la Comtesse de Grandlieu leaning on her daughter's arm, and the Duke and the Marquise walking up the grand stairway amid a deep silence, for the threatening brow of their master had awed all the servants.

Although the Baron d'Artagnon had learned of Gabrielle's flight, he had affirmed that she was under guard; but he trembled lest his own particular plot should be spoiled in case the Duke should see his plans miscarried by this flight.

These two sinister faces wore an expression of ferocity, ill disguised by the expression of good-humor imposed upon them by their gallantry. The Duke had sent orders to his son to present himself in the dining-hall. When the company had entered, the Baron d'Artagnon saw by Étienne's haggard countenance that Gabrielle's flight was as yet unknown to him.

"This is my son," said the old Duke, taking Étienne by the hand and presenting him to the ladies.

Étienne bowed, but said nothing. The Countess and Mademoiselle de Grandlieu exchanged a look that did not escape the old Duke.

"Your daughter will be but ill-matched," said he in an aside—"was not that your thought?"

"Quite the contrary, my dear Duke," replied the mother, smiling.

The Marquise de Noirmoutier, who was with her sister, began to laugh slyly. The laugh pierced Étienne's heart, as the mere sight of the haughty damsel had terrified him.

"Well, Monsieur le Duc," said his father in a low tone and with a leering smile, "have I not found you a fine mate? What do you say to this slip of a girl, my cherub?"

The old Duke had never doubted his son's obedience. Étienne was to him the child of his mother, the same pliant material.

"If he only has a son and then dies, decently!" thought the old man, "little will I care!"

"Father," said the child with a sweet voice, "I do not understand you."

"Come with me; I have something to say to you," said the Duke, passing into the state-room.

Étienne followed his father. The three ladies, moved by a curiosity that was shared by d'Artagnon, promenaded in the great hall in such fashion as to cluster around the door of the state-room that the Duke had left ajar.

"Dear Benjamin," said the Duke, softening his tone at first, "I have chosen for your wife this tall and beautiful demoiselle. She is the heiress of the estates of a younger branch of the Grandlieus, a good and ancient family of the duchy of Brittany. So be a noble suitor; recall all the pretty speeches in your book, and talk gallantly before acting so."

"Father, is it not a gentleman's first duty to keep his word?"

"Yes."

"Well, when I forgave you the death of my mother, dying here because of her marriage with you, did you not promise me never to oppose my wishes? 'I myself will obey you as the head of the family'—were not those your words? I do not demand anything of you; I but ask my own freedom in a matter which concerns my very life, and which concerns myself alone—my marriage."

"I understood," said the old Duke, feeling all his blood mount to his face, "that you would not oppose the continuance of our noble line."

"You have never made any conditions," replied Étienne. "I do not know what love has to do with the line; but I do

know that I love the daughter of your old friend Beauvouloir, and the granddaughter of your mistress, *la Belle Romaine.*"

"But she is dead," replied the colossus, with an expression, at once solemn and mocking, that bespoke his purpose of making away with her.

There was a moment of profound silence.

The Duke glanced up and perceived the three ladies and Baron d'Artagnon. At this supreme instant, Étienne, whose sense of hearing was very delicate, heard in the library the voice of the hapless Gabrielle, who, desiring to advise her lover of her presence, sang:

Une hermine
Est moins fine
Le lis a moins de blancheur.

The hated son, whom the dread speech of his father had plunged into the abyss of death, returned on the wings of poesy to the level of life. Though this movement of terror, quickly subdued, had broken his heart, he collected his strength, raised his head, looked his father in the eye for the first time in his life, answered scorn with scorn, and said with an accent of hatred:

"A gentleman should not lie!"

At one bound he sprang towards the door opposite that of the salon, and cried:

"Gabrielle!"

The sweet creature suddenly appeared in the shadow, like a lily in its foliage, trembling before the group of mocking women who had just learned of Étienne's passion. Like an oncoming thundercloud, the old Duke had become wrought up to a rage that cannot be described, as he stood there with the shining background of the three court ladies' handsome gowns. Between the extinction of his race and a mésalliance, any other man would have hesitated. But in this redoubtable old man lurked a ferocity that hitherto had overcome every human obstacle; he drew his sword as a matter of course,

since that was the only remedy he knew for the Gordian knots of life.

In this instance where his whole trend of thought and purpose had been utterly overthrown, the natural man must triumph. Twice detected in an arrant lie by a creature he loathed, by the child he had cursed a thousand times, and cursed more than ever, now when his unbearable feebleness—for the Duke the most unbearable trait of all—was victorious over an omnipotence hitherto unquestioned, the father and the man alike vanished; the tiger rushed from its secret lair. The old Duke, made young by avenging fury, hurled at the most entrancing pair of angels, that had ever deigned to set foot upon earth, a look fraught with hatred and dealing present death.

"Then die both of you! Perish, thou vile abortion, proof of my shame! And thou,"—turning upon Gabrielle—"wretched street-walker with the viper's tongue that has envenomed my race!"

The words carried to the hearts of the two children the terror with which they had been charged. When Étienne saw his father's huge hand menace Gabrielle with the sword, he fell, lifeless; and Gabrielle, trying to bear him up, expired by his side.

The old man shut the door in a rage, and said to Mademoiselle de Grandlieu:

"I will marry you myself!"

"And you are man enough still to found a noble line!" whispered the Countess to the old Duke, who had served under seven kings of France.

PARIS, 1831-1836.

THE ATHEIST'S MASS

This is dedicated to Auguste Borget by his friend De Balzac.

BIANCHON, a physician to whom science owes a fine system of theoretical physiology, and who, while still young, made himself a celebrity in the medical school of Paris, that central luminary to which European doctors do homage, practised surgery for a long time before he took up medicine. His earliest studies were guided by one of the greatest of French surgeons, the illustrious Desplein, who flashed across science like a meteor. By the consensus even of his enemies, he took with him to the tomb an incommunicable method. Like all men of genius, he had no heirs; he carried everything in him, and carried it away with him. The glory of a surgeon is like that of an actor: they live only so long as they are alive, and their talent leaves no trace when they are gone. Actors and surgeons, like great singers too, like the executants who by their performance increase the power of music tenfold, are all the heroes of a moment.

Desplein is a case in proof of this resemblance in the destinies of such transient genius. His name, yesterday so famous, to-day almost forgotten, will survive in his special department without crossing its limits. For must there not be some extraordinary circumstances to exalt the name of a professor from the history of Science to the general history of the human race? Had Desplein that universal command of knowledge which makes a man the living word, the great figure of his age? Desplein had a godlike eye; he saw into the sufferer and his malady by an intuition, natural or acquired, which enabled him to grasp the diagnostics peculiar to the individual, to determine the very time, the hour, the

minute when an operation should be performed, making due allowance for atmospheric conditions and peculiarities of individual temperament. To proceed thus, hand in hand with nature, had he then studied the constant assimilation by living beings, of the elements contained in the atmosphere, or yielded by the earth to man who absorbs them, deriving from them a particular expression of life? Did he work it all out by the power of deduction and analogy, to which we owe the genius of Cuvier? Be this as it may, this man was in all the secrets of the human frame; he knew it in the past and in the future, emphasizing the present.

But did he epitomize all science in his own person as Hippocrates did and Galen and Aristotle? Did he guide a whole school towards new worlds? No. Though it is impossible to deny that this persistent observer of human chemistry possessed the antique science of the Mages, that is to say, knowledge of the elements in fusion, the causes of life, life antecedent to life, and what it must be in its incubation or ever it *is,* it must be confessed that, unfortunately, everything in him was purely personal. Isolated during his life by his egoism, that egoism is now suicidal of his glory. On his tomb there is no proclaiming statue to repeat to posterity the mysteries which genius seeks out at its own cost.

But perhaps Desplein's genius was answerable for his beliefs, and for that reason mortal. To him the terrestrial atmosphere was a generative envelope; he saw the earth as an egg within its shell; and not being able to determine whether the egg or the hen first was, he would not recognize either the cock or the egg. He believed neither in the antecedent animal nor the surviving spirit of man. Desplein had no doubts; he was positive. His bold and unqualified atheism was like that of many scientific men, the best men in the world, but invincible atheists—atheists such as religious people declare to be impossible. This opinion could scarcely exist otherwise in a man who was accustomed from his youth to dissect the creature above all others—before, during, and after life; to

hunt through all his organs without ever finding the individual soul, which is indispensable to religious theory. When he detected a cerebral centre, a nervous centre, and a centre for aërating the blood—the first two so perfectly complementary that in the latter years of his life he came to a conviction that the sense of hearing is not absolutely necessary for hearing, nor the sense of sight for seeing, and that the solar plexus could supply their place without any possibility of doubt—Desplein, thus finding two souls in man, confirmed his atheism by this fact, though it is no evidence against God. This man died, it is said, in final impenitence, as do, unfortunately, many noble geniuses, whom God may forgive.

The life of this man, great as he was, was marred by many meannesses, to use the expression employed by his enemies, who were anxious to diminish his glory, but which it would be more proper to call apparent contradictions. Envious people and fools, having no knowledge of the determinations by which superior spirits are moved, seize at once on superficial inconsistencies, to formulate an accusation and so to pass sentence on them. If, subsequently, the proceedings thus attacked are crowned with success, showing the correlation of the preliminaries and the results, a few of the vanguard of calumnies always survive. In our own day, for instance, Napoleon was condemned by our contemporaries when he spread his eagle's wings to alight in England: only 1822 could explain 1804 and the flatboats at Boulogne.

As, in Desplein, his glory and science were invulnerable, his enemies attacked his odd moods and his temper, whereas, in fact, he was simply characterized by what the English call eccentricity. Sometimes very handsomely dressed, like Crébillon the tragical, he would suddenly affect extreme indifference as to what he wore; he was sometimes seen in a carriage, and sometimes on foot. By turns rough and kind, harsh and covetous on the surface, but capable of offering his whole fortune to his exiled masters—who did him the honor of accepting it for a few days—no man ever gave rise to such contradictory judgments. Although to obtain a black ribbon,

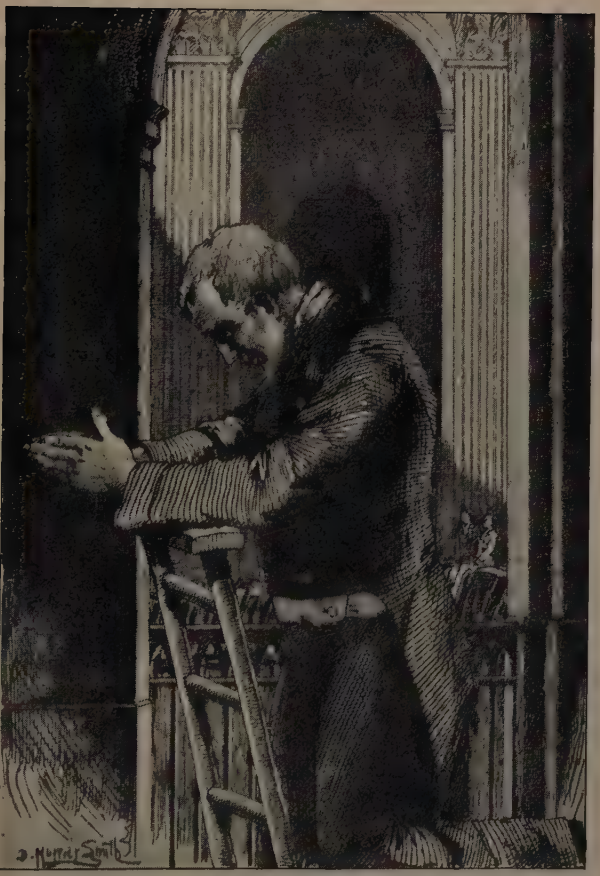
which physicians ought not to intrigue for, he was capable of dropping a prayer-book out of his pocket at Court, in his heart he mocked at everything; he had a deep contempt for men, after studying them from above and below, after detecting their genuine expression when performing the most solemn and the meanest acts of their lives.

The qualities of a great man are often federative. If among these colossal spirits one has more talent than wit, his wit is still superior to that of a man of whom it is simply stated that "he is witty." Genius always presupposes moral insight. This insight may be applied to a special subject; but he who can see a flower must be able to see the sun. The man who on hearing a diplomate he had saved ask, "How is the Emperor?" could say, "The courtier is alive; the man will follow!"—that man in not merely a surgeon or a physician, he is prodigiously witty also. Hence a patient and diligent student of human nature will admit Desplein's exorbitant pretensions, and believe—as he himself believed—that he might have been no less great as a minister than he was as a surgeon.

Among the riddles which Desplein's life presents to many of his contemporaries, we have chosen one of the most interesting, because the answer is to be found at the end of the narrative, and will avenge him for some foolish charges.

Of all the students in Desplein's hospital, Horace Bianchon was one of those to whom he most warmly attached himself. Before being a house surgeon at the Hôtel-Dieu, Horace Bianchon had been a medical student lodging in a squalid boarding-house in the *Quartier Latin,* known as the Maison Vauquer. This poor young man had felt there the gnawing of that burning poverty which is a sort of crucible from which great talents are to emerge as pure and incorruptible as diamonds, which may be subjected to any shock without being crushed. In the fierce fire of their unbridled passions they acquire the most impeccable honesty, and get into the habit of fighting the battles which await genius with the constant work by which they coerce their cheated appetites.

Horace was an upright young fellow, incapable of tergiver-



This audacious scoffer kneeling humbly.

sation on a matter of honor, going to the point without waste of words, and as ready to pledge his cloak for a friend as to give him his time and his night hours. Horace, in short, was one of those friends who are never anxious as to what they may get in return for what they give, feeling sure that they will in their turn get more than they give. Most of his friends felt for him that deeply-seated respect which is inspired by unostentatious virtue, and many of them dreaded his censure. But Horace made no pedantic display of his qualities. He was neither a puritan nor a preacher; he could swear with a grace as he gave his advice, and was always ready for a jollification when occasion offered. A jolly companion, not more prudish than a trooper, as frank and outspoken—not as a sailor, for nowadays sailors are wily diplomates—but as an honest man who has nothing in his life to hide, he walked with his head erect, and a mind content. In short, to put the facts into a word, Horace was the Pylades of more than one Orestes—creditors being regarded as the nearest modern equivalent to the Furies of the ancients.

He carried his poverty with the cheerfulness which is perhaps one of the chief elements of courage, and, like all people who have nothing, he made very few debts. As sober as a camel and active as a stag, he was steadfast in his ideas and his conduct.

The happy phase of Bianchon's life began on the day when the famous surgeon had proof of the qualities and the defects which, these no less than those, make Doctor Horace Bianchon doubly dear to his friends. When a leading clinical practitioner takes a young man to his bosom, that young man has, as they say, his foot in the stirrup. Desplein did not fail to take Bianchon as his assistant to wealthy houses, where some complimentary fee almost always found its way into the student's pocket, and where the mysteries of Paris life were insensibly revealed to the young provincial; he kept him at his side when a consultation was to be held, and gave him occupation; sometimes he would send him to a watering-place with a rich patient; in fact, he was making a practice for

him. The consequence was that in the course of time the Tyrant of surgery had a devoted ally. These two men—one at the summit of honor and of his science, enjoying an immense fortune and an immense reputation; the other a humble Omega, having neither fortune nor fame—became intimate friends.

The great Desplein told his house surgeon everything; the disciple knew whether such or such a woman had sat on a chair near the master, or on the famous couch in Desplein's surgery, on which he slept; Bianchon knew the mysteries of that temperament, a compound of the lion and the bull, which at last expanded and enlarged beyond measure the great man's torso, and caused his death by degeneration of the heart. He studied the eccentricities of that busy life, the schemes of that sordid avarice, the hopes of the politician who lurked behind the man of science; he was able to foresee the mortifications that awaited the only sentiment that lay hid in a heart that was steeled, but not of steel.

One day Bianchon spoke to Desplein of a poor water-carrier of the Saint-Jacques district, who had a horrible disease caused by fatigue and want; this wretched Auvergnat had had nothing but potatoes to eat during the dreadful winter of 1821. Desplein left all his visits, and at the risk of killing his horse, he rushed off, followed by Bianchon, to the poor man's dwelling, and saw, himself, to his being removed to a sick house, founded by the famous Dubois in the Faubourg Saint-Denis. Then he went to attend the man, and when he had cured him he gave him the necessary sum to buy a horse and a water-barrel. This Auvergnat distinguished himself by an amusing action. One of his friends fell ill, and he took him at once to Desplein, saying to his benefactor, "I could not have borne to let him go to any one else!"

Rough customer as he was, Desplein grasped the water-carrier's hand, and said, "Bring them all to me."

He got the native of Cantal into the Hôtel-Dieu, where he took the greatest care of him. Bianchon had already observed in his chief a predilection for Auvergnats, and es-

pecially for water-carriers; but as Desplein took a sort of pride in his cures at the Hôtel-Dieu, the pupil saw nothing very strange in that.

One day, as he crossed the Place Saint-Sulpice, Bianchon caught sight of his master going into the church at about nine in the morning. Desplein, who at that time never went a step without his cab, was on foot, and slipped in by the door in the Rue du Petit-Lion, as if he were stealing into some house of ill fame. The house surgeon, naturally possessed by curiosity, knowing his master's opinions, and being himself a rabid follower of Cabanis (*Cabaniste en dyable,* with the *y,* which in Rabelais seems to convey an intensity of devilry)—Bianchon stole into the church, and was not a little astonished to see the great Desplein, the atheist, who had no mercy on the angels—who give no work to the lancet, and cannot suffer from fistula or gastritis—in short, this audacious scoffer kneeling humbly, and where? In the Lady Chapel, where he remained through the mass, giving alms for the expenses of the service, alms for the poor, and looking as serious as though he were superintending an operation.

"He has certainly not come here to clear up the question of the Virgin's delivery," said Bianchon to himself, astonished beyond measure. "If I had caught him holding one of the ropes of the canopy on Corpus Christi day, it would be a thing to laugh at; but at this hour, alone, with no one to see—it is surely a thing to marvel at!"

Bianchon did not wish to seem as though he were spying the head surgeon of the Hôtel-Dieu; he went away. As it happened, Desplein asked him to dine with him that day, not at his own house, but at a restaurant. At dessert Bianchon skilfully contrived to talk of the mass, speaking of it as mummery and a farce.

"A farce," said Desplein, "which has cost Christendom more blood than all Napoleon's battles and all Broussais' leeches. The mass is a papal invention, not older than the sixth century, and based on the *Hoc est corpus.* What floods of blood were shed to establish the Fête-Dieu, the Festival of

Corpus Christi—the institution by which Rome established her triumph in the question of the Real Presence, a schism which rent the Church during three centuries! The wars of the Count of Toulouse against the Albigenses were the tail end of that dispute. The Vaudois and the Albigenses refused to recognize this innovation."

In short, Desplein was delighted to disport himself in his most atheistical vein; a flow of Voltairean satire, or, to be accurate, a vile imitation of the *Citateur*.

"Hallo! where is my worshiper of this morning?" said Bianchon to himself.

He said nothing; he began to doubt whether he had really seen his chief at Saint-Sulpice. Desplein would not have troubled himself to tell Bianchon a lie, they knew each other too well; they had already exchanged thoughts on quite equally serious subjects, and discussed systems *de natura rerum,* probing or dissecting them with the knife and scalpel of incredulity.

Three months went by. Bianchon did not attempt to follow the matter up, though it remained stamped on his memory. One day that year, one of the physicians of the Hôtel-Dieu took Desplein by the arm, as if to question him, in Bianchon's presence.

"What were you doing at Saint-Sulpice, my dear master?" said he.

"I went to see a priest who has a diseased knee-bone, and to whom the Duchesse d'Angoulême did me the honor to recommend me," said Desplein.

The questioner took this defeat for an answer; not so Bianchon.

"Oh, he goes to see damaged knees in church!—He went to mass," said the young man to himself.

Bianchon resolved to watch Desplein. He remembered the day and hour when he had detected him going into Saint-Sulpice, and resolved to be there again next year on the same day and at the same hour, to see if he should find him there again. In that case the periodicity of his devotions would justify a

scientific investigation; for in such a man there ought to be no direct antagonism of thought and action.

Next year, on the said day and hour, Bianchon, who had already ceased to be Desplein's house surgeon, saw the great man's cab standing at the corner of the Rue de Tournon and the Rue du Petit-Lion, whence his friend jesuitically crept along by the wall of Saint-Sulpice, and once more attended mass in front of the Virgin's altar. It was Desplein, sure enough! The master-surgeon, the atheist at heart, the worshiper by chance. The mystery was greater than ever; the regularity of the phenomenon complicated it. When Desplein had left, Bianchon went to the sacristan, who took charge of the chapel, and asked him whether the gentleman were a constant worshiper.

"For twenty years that I have been here," replied the man, "M. Desplein has come four times a year to attend this mass. He founded it."

"A mass founded by him!" said Bianchon, as he went away. "This is as great a mystery as the Immaculate Conception—an article which alone is enough to make a physician an unbeliever."

Some time elapsed before Doctor Bianchon, though so much his friend, found an opportunity of speaking to Desplein of this incident of his life. Though they met in consultation, or in society, it was difficult to find an hour of confidential solitude when, sitting with their feet on the fire-dogs and their head resting on the back of an armchair, two men tell each other their secrets. At last, seven years later, after the Revolution of 1830, when the mob invaded the Archbishop's residence, when Republican agitators spurred them on to destroy the gilt crosses which flashed like streaks of lightning in the immensity of the ocean of houses; when Incredulity flaunted itself in the streets, side by side with Rebellion, Bianchon once more detected Desplein going into Saint-Sulpice. The doctor followed him, and knelt down by him without the slightest notice or demonstration of surprise from his friend. They both attended this mass of his founding.

"Will you tell me, my dear fellow," said Bianchon, as they left the church, "the reason for your fit of monkishness? I have caught you three times going to mass—— You! You must account to me for this mystery, explain such a flagrant disagreement between your opinions and your conduct. You do not believe in God, and yet you attend mass? My dear master, you are bound to give me an answer."

"I am like a great many devout people, men who on the surface are deeply religious, but quite as much atheists as you or I can be."

And he poured out a torrent of epigrams on certain political personages, of whom the best known gives us, in this century, a new edition of Molière's *Tartufe*.

"All that has nothing to do with my question," retorted Bianchon. "I want to know the reason for what you have just been doing, and why you founded this mass."

"Faith! my dear boy," said Desplein, "I am on the verge of the tomb; I may safely tell you about the beginning of my life."

At this moment Bianchon and the great man were in the Rue des Quatre-Vents, one of the worst streets in Paris. Desplein pointed to the sixth floor of one of the houses looking like obelisks, of which the narrow door opens into a passage with a winding staircase at the end, with windows appropriately termed "borrowed lights"—or, in French, *jours de souffrance*. It was a greenish structure; the ground floor occupied by a furniture-dealer, while each floor seemed to shelter a different and independent form of misery. Throwing up his arm with a vehement gesture, Desplein exclaimed:

"I lived up there for two years."

"I know; Arthez lived there; I went up there almost every day during my first youth; we used to call it then the pickle-jar of great men! What then?"

"The mass I have just attended is connected with some events which took place at the time when I lived in the garret where you say Arthez lived; the one with the window where

the clothes line is hanging with linen over a pot of flowers. My early life was so hard, my dear Bianchon, that I may dispute the palm of Paris suffering with any man living. I have endured everything: hunger and thirst, want of money, want of clothes, of shoes, of linen, every cruelty that penury can inflict. I have blown on my frozen fingers in that *pickle-jar of great men,* which I should like to see again, now, with you. I worked through a whole winter, seeing my head steam, and perceiving the atmosphere of my own moisture as we see that of horses on a frosty day. I do not know where a man finds the fulcrum that enables him to hold out against such a life.

"I was alone, with no one to help me, no money to buy books or to pay the expenses of my medical training; I had not a friend; my irascible, touchy, restless temper was against me. No one understood that this irritability was the distress and toil of a man who, at the bottom of the social scale, is struggling to reach the surface. Still, I had, as I may say to you, before whom I need wear no draperies, I had that ground-bed of good feeling and keen sensitiveness which must always be the birthright of any man who is strong enough to climb to any height whatever, after having long trampled in the bogs of poverty. I could obtain nothing from my family, nor from my home, beyond my inadequate allowance. In short, at that time, I breakfasted off a roll which the baker in the Rue du Petit-Lion sold me cheap because it was left from yesterday or the day before, and I crumbled it into milk; thus my morning meal cost me but two sous. I dined only every other day in a boarding-house where the meal cost me sixteen sous. You know as well as I what care I must have taken of my clothes and shoes. I hardly know whether in later life we feel grief so deep when a colleague plays us false, as we have known, you and I, on detecting the mocking smile of a gaping seam in a shoe, or hearing the armhole of a coat split. I drank nothing but water; I regarded a café with distant respect. Zoppi's seemed to me a promised land where none but the Lucullus of the *pays Latin* had a right of entry.

'Shall I ever take a cup of coffee there with milk in it?' said I to myself, 'or play a game of dominoes?'

"I threw into my work the fury I felt at my misery. I tried to master positive knowledge so as to acquire the greatest personal value, and merit the position I should hold as soon as I could escape from nothingness. I consumed more oil than bread; the light I burned during these endless nights cost me more than food. It was a long duel, obstinate, with no sort of consolation. I found no sympathy anywhere. To have friends, must we not form connections with young men, have a few sous so as to be able to go tippling with them, and meet them where students congregate? And I had nothing! And no one in Paris can understand that nothing means *nothing*. When I even thought of revealing my beggary, I had that nervous contraction of the throat which makes a sick man believe that a ball rises up from the œsophagus into the larynx.

"In later life I have met people born to wealth who, never having wanted for anything, had never even heard this problem in the rule of three: A young man is to crime as a five-franc piece is to *x*.—These gilded idiots say to me, 'Why did you get into debt? Why did you involve yourself in such onerous obligations?' They remind me of the princess who, on hearing that the people lacked bread, said, 'Why do not they buy cakes?' I should like to see one of these rich men, who complain that I charge too much for an operation,—yes, I should like to see him alone in Paris without a sou, without a friend, without credit, and forced to work with his five fingers to live at all! What would he do? Where would he go to satisfy his hunger?

"Bianchon, if you have sometimes seen me hard and bitter, it was because I was adding my early sufferings on to the insensibility, the selfishness of which I have seen thousands of instances in the highest circles; or, perhaps, I was thinking of the obstacles which hatred, envy, jealousy, and calumny raised up between me and success. In Paris, when certain people see you ready to set your foot in the stirrup, some pull your

coat-tails, others loosen the buckle of the strap that you may fall and crack your skull; one wrenches off your horse's shoes, another steals your whip, and the least treacherous of them all is the man whom you see coming to fire his pistol at you point blank.

"You yourself, my dear boy, are clever enough to make acquaintance before long with the odious and incessant warfare waged by mediocrity against the superior man. If you should drop five-and-twenty louis one day, you will be accused of gambling on the next, and your best friends will report that you have lost twenty-five thousand. If you have a headache, you will be considered mad. If you are a little hasty, no one can live with you. If, to make a stand against this armament of pigmies, you collect your best powers, your best friends will cry out that you want to have everything, that you aim at domineering, at tyranny. In short, your good points will become your faults, your faults will be vices, and your virtues crime.

"If you save a man, you will be said to have killed him; if he reappears on the scene, it will be positive that you have secured the present at the cost of the future. If he is not dead, he will die. Stumble, and you fall! Invent anything of any kind and claim your rights, you will be crotchety, cunning, ill-disposed to rising younger men.

"So, you see, my dear fellow, if I do not believe in God, I believe still less in man. But do not you know in me another Desplein, altogether different from the Desplein whom every one abuses?—However, we will not stir that mud-heap.

"Well, I was living in that house, I was working hard to pass my first examination, and I had no money at all. You know. I had come to one of those moments of extremity when a man says, 'I will enlist.' I had one hope. I expected from my home a box full of linen, a present from one of those old aunts who, knowing nothing of Paris, think of your shirts, while they imagine that their nephew with thirty francs a month is eating ortolans. The box arrived while I was at the schools; it had cost forty francs for carriage. The porter,

a German shoemaker living in a loft, had paid the money and kept the box. I walked up and down the Rue des Fossés-Saint-Germain-des-Près and the Rue de l'École de Médecine without hitting on any scheme which would release my trunk without the payment of the forty francs, which of course I could pay as soon as I should have sold the linen. My stupidity proved to me that surgery was my only vocation. My good fellow, refined souls, whose powers move in a lofty atmosphere, have none of that spirit of intrigue that is fertile in resource and device; their good genius is chance; they do not invent, things come to them.

"At night I went home, at the very moment when my fellow lodger also came in—a water-carrier named Bourgeat, a native of Saint-Flour. We knew each other as two lodgers do who have rooms off the same landing, and who hear each other sleeping, coughing, dressing, and so at last become used to one another. My neighbor informed me that the landlord, to whom I owed three quarters' rent, had turned me out; I must clear out next morning. He himself was also turned out on account of his occupation. I spent the most miserable night of my life. Where was I to get a messenger who could carry my few chattels and my books? How could I pay him and the porter? Where was I to go? I repeated these unanswerable questions again and again, in tears, as madmen repeat their tunes. I fell asleep; poverty has for its friends heavenly slumbers full of beautiful dreams.

"Next morning, just as I was swallowing my little bowl of bread soaked in milk, Bourgeat came in and said to me in his vile Auvergne accent:

"'*Mouchieur l'Etudiant,* I am a poor man, a foundling from the hospital at Saint-Flour, without either father or mother, and not rich enough to marry. You are not fertile in relations either, nor well supplied with the ready? Listen, I have a hand-cart downstairs which I have hired for two sous an hour; it will hold all our goods; if you like, we will try to find lodgings together, since we are both turned out of this. It is not the earthly paradise, when all is said and done.'

"'I know that, my good Bourgeat,' said I. 'But I am in a great fix. I have a trunk downstairs with a hundred francs' worth of linen in it, out of which I could pay the landlord and all I owe to the porter, and I have not a hundred sous."

"'Pooh! I have a few dibs," replied Bourgeat joyfully, and he pulled out a greasy old leather purse. 'Keep your linen.'

"Bourgeat paid up my arrears and his own, and settled with the porter. Then he put our furniture and my box of linen in his cart, and pulled it along the street, stopping in front of every house where there was a notice board. I went up to see whether the rooms to let would suit us. At midday we were still wandering about the neighborhood without having found anything. The price was the great difficulty. Bourgeat proposed that we should eat at a wine shop, leaving the cart at the door. Towards evening I discovered, in the Cour de Rohan, Passage du Commerce, at the very top of a house next the roof, two rooms with a staircase between them. Each of us was to pay sixty francs a year. So there we were housed, my humble friend and I. We dined together. Bourgeat, who earned about fifty sous a day, had saved a hundred crowns or so; he would soon be able to gratify his ambition by buying a barrel and a horse. On learning my situation—for he extracted my secrets with a quiet craftiness and good nature, of which the remembrance touches my heart to this day, he gave up for a time the ambition of his whole life; for twenty-two years he had been carrying water in the street, and he now devoted his hundred crowns to my future prospects."

Desplein at these words clutched Bianchon's arm tightly. "He gave me the money for my examination fees! That man, my friend, understood that I had a mission, that the needs of my intellect were greater than his. He looked after me, he called me his boy, he lent me money to buy books, he would come in softly sometimes to watch me at work, and took a mother's care in seeing that I had wholesome and abundant food, instead of the bad and insufficient nourishment I had been condemned to. Bourgeat, a man of about forty, had a

homely, mediæval type of face, a prominent forehead, a head that a painter might have chosen as a model for that of Lycurgus. The poor man's heart was big with affections seeking an object; he had never been loved but by a poodle that had died some time since, of which he would talk to me, asking whether I thought the Church would allow masses to be said for the repose of its soul. His dog, said he, had been a good Christian, who for twelve years had accompanied him to church, never barking, listening to the organ without opening his mouth, and crouching beside him in a way that made it seem as though he were praying too.

"This man centered all his affections in me; he looked upon me as a forlorn and suffering creature, and he became, to me, the most thoughtful mother, the most considerate benefactor, the ideal of the virtue which rejoices in its own work. When I met him in the street, he would throw me a glance of intelligence full of unutterable dignity; he would affect to walk as though he carried no weight, and seemed happy in seeing me in good health and well dressed. It was, in fact, the devoted affection of the lower classes, the love of a girl of the people transferred to a loftier level. Bourgeat did all my errands, woke me at night at any fixed hour, trimmed my lamp, cleaned our landing; as good as a servant as he was as a father, and as clean as an English girl. He did all the housework. Like Philopœmen, he sawed our wood, and gave to all he did the grace of simplicity while preserving his dignity, for he seemed to understand that the end ennobles every act.

"When I left this good fellow, to be house surgeon at the Hôtel-Dieu, I felt an indescribable, dull pain, knowing that he could no longer live with me; but he comforted himself with the prospect of saving up money enough for me to take my degree, and he made me promise to go to see him whenever I had a day out: Bourgeat was proud of me. He loved me for my own sake, and for his own. If you look up my thesis, you will see that I dedicated it to him.

"During the last year of my residence as house surgeon I earned enough to repay all I owed to this worthy Auvergnat

by buying him a barrel and a horse. He was furious with rage at learning that I had been depriving myself of spending my money, and yet he was delighted to see his wishes fulfilled; he laughed and scolded, he looked at his barrel, at his horse, and wiped away a tear, as he said, 'It is too bad. What a splendid barrel! You really ought not. Why, that horse is as strong as an Auvergnat!'

"I never saw a more touching scene. Bourgeat insisted on buying for me the case of instruments mounted in silver which you have seen in my room, and which is to me the most precious thing there. Though enchanted with my first success, never did the least sign, the least word, escape him which might imply, 'This man owes all to me!' And yet, but for him, I should have died of want; he had eaten bread rubbed with garlic that I might have coffee to enable me to sit up at night.

"He fell ill. As you may suppose, I passed my nights by his bedside, and the first time I pulled him through; but two years after he had a relapse; in spite of the utmost care, in spite of the greatest exertions of science, he succumbed. No king was ever nursed as he was. Yes, Bianchon, to snatch that man from death I tried unheard-of things. I wanted him to live long enough to show him his work accomplished, to realize all his hopes, to give expression to the only need for gratitude that ever filled my heart, to quench a fire that burns in me to this day.

"Bourgeat, my second father, died in my arms," Desplein went on, after a pause, visibly moved. "He left me everything he possessed by a will he had had made by a public scrivener, dating from the year when we had gone to live in the Cour de Rohan.

"This man's faith was perfect; he loved the Holy Virgin as he might have loved his wife. He was an ardent Catholic, but never said a word to me about my want of religion. When he was dying he entreated me to spare no expense that he might have every possible benefit of clergy. I had a mass said for him every day. Often, in the night, he would tell me of

his fears as to his future fate; he feared his life had not been saintly enough. Poor man! he was at work from morning till night. For whom, then, is Paradise—if there be a Paradise? He received the last sacrament like the saint that he was, and his death was worthy of his life.

"I alone followed him to the grave. When I had laid my only benefactor to rest, I looked about to see how I could pay my debt to him; I found he had neither family nor friends, neither wife nor child. But he believed. He had a religious conviction; had I any right to dispute it? He had spoken to me timidly of masses said for the repose of the dead; he would not impress it on me as a duty, thinking that it would be a form of repayment for his services. As soon as I had money enough I paid to Saint-Sulpice the requisite sum for four masses every year. As the only thing I can do for Bourgeat is thus to satisfy his pious wishes, on the days when that mass is said, at the beginning of each season of the year, I go for his sake and say the required prayers; and I say with the good faith of a sceptic—'Great God, if there is a sphere which Thou hast appointed after death for those who have been perfect, remember good Bourgeat; and if he should have anything to suffer, let me suffer it for him, that he may enter all the sooner into what is called Paradise.'

"That, my dear fellow, is as much as a man who holds my opinions can allow himself. But God must be a good fellow; He cannot owe me any grudge. I swear to you, I would give my whole fortune if faith such as Bourgeat's could enter my brain."

Bianchon, who was with Desplein all through his last illness, dares not affirm to this day that the great surgeon died an atheist. Will not those who believe like to fancy that the humble Auvergnat came to open the gate of heaven to his friend, as he did that of the earthly temple on whose pediment we read the words—"A grateful country to its great men."

PARIS, *January* 1836.